

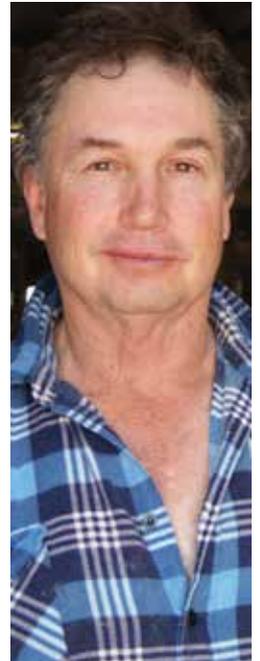
• FOR RURAL WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES •

The Country Web

VIEWS FROM THE VERANDAH

FREE NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 58 AUTUMN 2013



rural women's network
connecting regional & remote NSW

ONE FARM DAY SERIES ■ 2013 RWA FINALISTS ■ COMMUNITY KITCHEN SUCCESS

contents

THE COUNTRY WEB

The Country Web is produced by NSW Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network (RWN) and is distributed free. For more about the RWN see page 5.

EDITING/DESKTOP PUBLISHING

Allison Priest

CONTRIBUTIONS

Letters, stories, poems and photographs from rural women and their families are welcome.

FREE MAILING LIST

You can download *The Country Web* from our website and receive an email alert when a new edition is available. See our website to subscribe. If you live in NSW and would like to receive a copy in the mail contact RWN.

ADVERTISING

13 000 copies of *The Country Web* are produced each edition. We welcome advertisements and offer competitive rates. Sponsorship and insert options also available.

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COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Information on how to enter and prize details form part of the Terms & Conditions. By entering the competition, entrants accept these Terms & Conditions. 2. To enter, you must provide your full name and postal details, and in 25 words or less answer the competition question. 3. Entries must be posted to the stated address by the stated date. 4. This competition is a game of skill. The best answer as judged by the RWN will win. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The winner will be notified by mail within 14 days from the judging date.

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editorial – bringing in the change

There are times in our lives that call for sombre reflection and this is one of those.

The metaphor

We have trained a beautiful red rose on the verandah that shades much of our house. Just outside our bedroom window a little bird with a long tail has made a nest in the branches of that rose. I have not been able to identify the bird as she has been so busy with the nest and now the three little lives that depend upon her and the nest for their safety. The rose, a thing of beauty, has become a shelter for small creatures—an unexpected dividend.

Life never stands still. Life changes: the way the rose has changed our environment at home is but one example. Every day I now pray for the fragile chicks that live in that nest whilst knowing that these little birds have to face the challenges of their short lives.

The reality

Over 20 years ago the Rural Women's Network did not exist. It and its State Advisory Committee (SAC) were

established by the Greiner Government to enable the exchange of information between rural women and government on pressing and relevant issues and to develop initiatives to meet the needs of rural women and their communities. This saw the commencement of the annual Rural Women's Gatherings, SOFT Courses and the launch of *The Country Web* newsletter in 1993. The SAC also supported the RIRDC Rural Women's Award.

The Members of the SAC, later the Rural Women's Council (RWC) represented the Country Women's Association, NSW Farmers, the Livestock Health & Pest Authority, Natural Resource Management, the Far West Area, Rural Financial Councillors Aboriginal Women, Academia, Premier's Council for Women and the Minister. We are committed to the rationale for the RWC—a consultative body ensuring the effectiveness of Government policy for rural NSW, whilst creating and drawing on strong relationships with a wide variety

of stakeholders and networks of rural women.

Some of the issues we raised

In my previous RWC Updates I outlined the issues we raised with the Primary Industries Minister and remind you of some:

- The need for training in the use of pesticides; especially warnings for pregnant women and those from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Tourism issues for the Far West Area
- The issues rather than the perception, e.g. the farmer as the keeper of the environment rather than the exploiter
- The paucity of dental and medical services
- Youth employment opportunities in regional areas
- The hidden cost of drought
- Hospital discharge procedures for rural patients



Nerida Cullen, Past Co-Chair, NSW Rural Women's Council

- Farm safety, especially for women and children

I would like to think that all the issues we raised were solved but as I mentioned in one of my Updates, it takes time to effect results. Our tour of the dental facilities at the Orange Campus of Charles Sturt University showed us that a positive start had been made about the availability of dental services in country towns and our Forum in Griffith reinforced that the our concerns were shared concerns.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2013

MARCH

DATE TBA

Farm Day. A great day out where a farm family hosts a city family for a day of real hands-on experiences and a greater understanding of the day-to-day life of the farming family. For more details and to register see www.farmday.com.au

8: INTERNATIONAL

International Women's Day. A day to celebrate the contribution and achievements of women and to remember the barriers that women have broken through and the accomplishments they have made despite

those barriers. To find out what's happening near you see: www.internationalwomensday.org.au

26: SYDNEY

2013 NSW–ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award. A special Gala Dinner to celebrate and announce the 2013 RWA winner and runner-up.

MAY

1: NSW STATEWIDE

Nominations open for 2013 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Nominate a friend, family member, colleague, community worker—any rural woman who you believe makes your community a better place to live. Contact RWN for details.

OCTOBER

25–27: SCONE

NSW Rural Women's Gathering. There's lots of planning underway for a fabulous weekend of 'Horsin Around'. Workshops on all sorts of topics, guest speakers being rounded up. Tours of the area including the beautiful Horse Studs and lots more fun activities. So dust off those fascinators and mark your diary now, book your accommodation and gather your friends together to plan your trip to Scone. For more information see: www.upperhuntertourism.com.au

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next two editions of *The Country Web* will be a two-part series with the themes: **'Pride in our Past' and 'Faith in our Future'**. For our next edition we invite you to share stories of women who have come before you—your mother, grandmother and great grandmother—women who have played a role in building family and communities across NSW.

Contributions due 25 May for September publication. Send to: *Country Web*, Locked Bag 21, ORANGE 2800 or email: allison.priest@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Women crossing boundaries

Congratulations on the wonderful articles on Women Crossing Boundaries. As a TAFE Outreach Coordinator and Teacher on the WOW (Work Opportunities for Women) Course I have found these articles so inspiring and will certainly be showing the women in our courses just how successful they too can be if they choose to work in traditionally male dominated areas. This is a theme I enjoy exploring with the women we enrol. Congratulations on a fantastic issue.

Tracy Crompton, TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute

A positive force for the future and congratulations

Great to see *The Country Web* so full of young people in Agriculture in the last [Spring 2012] edition and all of them doing so well—it means the Rural Women's Network (RWN) will be a positive force for the future. We need capable women in all walks of life, and you have shown many of these women in 'Women Crossing Boundaries'.

Congratulations to Sonia Muir for her tremendous efforts with the RWN. To have a 20 year celebration is a wonderful achievement. I have been to many of the NSW Women's Gatherings starting with Bourke, with my daughter-in-law, a set of twins in baskets and a two-year-old, for a day of interesting talks. All the others I have attended have been informative and fun, not to mention all the interesting places I have visited from Kempsey to Wentworth and Temora to Wellington via Coonamble to mention a few.

Congratulations to the RWN. Keep *The Country Web* going please and keep me on the mailing list. Please don't make it only available online; it is nice to read when relaxing in a comfortable chair or bed.

What a great team, what enthusiasm and drive.

Julian Campbell, Warren

Getting to know our farmers

On a recent holiday driving from East Maitland through West

Wyalong, Mildura, Port Augusta and Adelaide, on our way to the Flinders Ranges and back, we enjoyed the vastness and the great diversity of our wonderful country.

The productivity of our great land was evident at all turns. It was however not until we turned onto a relatively minor road that we could definitely state what was growing in the fields lining our journey. Along the Laura to Port Pirie Road, the farmers had signs on fences identifying the crop. The ability to connect this information with our grocery aisle was in my opinion very worthwhile.

We have an increasing need to engage all levels of people within the agricultural sector. And there is a need to provide the younger generation with a clear link between agriculture and food production. What an easy way to inform and prompt conversations on this topic as families travel our roads.

Carolann Aartsen, East Maitland

Ed: I discovered these signs are most likely 'crop variety names' used by seed companies. It does sounds like a practical idea for farmers to help educate people about farming.

Breast Cancer awareness

I extend a heartfelt thank you to the local community for getting behind breast cancer awareness month and Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon. Through the support of our generous volunteers and western region locals, Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon has grown to be a great success. It is great to see so many people in the area holding fundraisers, both new hosts and loyal supporters, and the volunteers across the West.

One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. In the West alone around 189 women will be diagnosed this year. This demonstrates how valuable community support is.

Those involved in Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon continue to make a

difference by supporting the only charity that funds and supports the entire breast cancer journey, including research, prevention programs and support services for patients and their families. Thanks for helping Cancer Council in its mission to defeat cancer.

Debbie Thornberry, Cancer Council NSW – Western Region



Boobs in the bush

I have a wonderfully imaginative friend who earlier this year rang in tears with news that a very beloved sister-in-law was to have her second breast removed after her cancer had returned. My friend was determined to be positive for her sister-in-law and had an idea to bring attention to how difficult cancer can be for women who live in the bush, no matter how far from a cancer care centre—and so, 'Boobs in the Bush' was born.

The idea being that during October (breast cancer month) women in the bush would tie, hang or pin bras to their cars, mailboxes, clotheslines, wherever they could be seen, to celebrate the women in their lives. So I did! My 16 beautiful bras celebrated my two grandmothers, my mother and mother in law, my three sisters, our two daughters and two daughters-in-law and our five granddaughters. The bras were purchased from op shops, Vinnies, Salvos etc. and all are to be sent to Calvary Hospital at Wagga Wagga for distribution to women in the islands. How good is that!

Maybe there are groups of women in organisations or villages and towns who might like the idea. Let's all celebrate the women in the bush who are fighting breast cancer.

Anne Hart, Old Junee

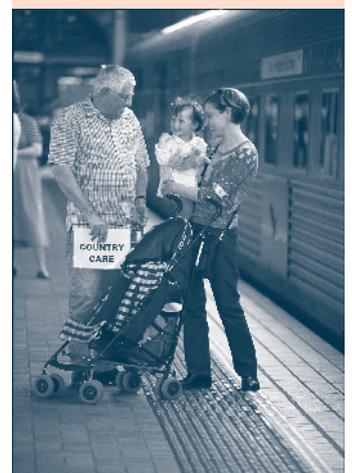
Country Care Link

CARING FOR COUNTRY FAMILIES

A confidential family information and support service for Country NSW, *Country Care Link* provides:

- a volunteer to meet country people in Sydney (48 hours notice necessary for transport: exceptions in emergency situations)
- assistance to find short-term accommodation for country people in the city
- a referral service to find information
- referrals for confidential personal counselling
- a friendly voice for a chat
- visits (on request) for country people in hospital.

**Country Care Link
Monday to Friday
9.30 am to 3.00 pm
Ph: 1800 806 160 or
02 8382 6434**





RWN Team: Novelle Hasling, Sonia Muir, Emma Regan and Allison Priest

Rural Women's Network is a statewide government program working in innovative ways to share information and promote action on rural women's issues. RWN can help you:

- Promote activities and share information via our networks
- Give presentations and facilitate workshops or send information for you to distribute
- Connect you with key individuals, groups and agencies

Current projects:

- RIRDC Rural Women's Award: a leadership and development Award
- Shaping Our Futures Together: a 2 day self-development workshop
- Annual NSW Rural Women's Gathering
- Hidden Treasures: recognising rural women volunteers

T: 02 6391 3620

E: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au

W: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn

Blog: <http://nswruralwomensnetwork.wordpress.com>

Twitter: @NSW_RWN

YouTube: youtube.com/nswrwn

On 12 January 1993 I started work at the NSW Rural Women's Network (RWN) with the primary aim of establishing a newsletter. Where have those 20 years gone?

Looking back I am humbled by the wonderful women and men I have met who have dedicated their lives to rural, regional or remote communities.

Little did I know when I took on that one-year contract that I'd still be here in 2013 part of an awesome network that reaches far and wide and taps into people beyond our state and country borders. What a privilege it has been.

I thought my 20th RWN birthday was a good time to reflect on some milestones achieved along my RWN journey. I hope these may trigger memories for many of you who shared times with me along the road.

2012 was a celebration of 20 years of the rural women's gathering movement. Having been a part of the first organising team in 1993 we could never have envisaged the 'movement' would continue to inspire—but it has!

Congratulations to Parkes and all the committees who delivered events in their towns over these years. The 2013 Gathering will be hosted by Scone on 25–27 October so mark your diaries.

This year we launched the new **Rural Women Connect** project where we will use phone hook-ups, technology and social media tools like twitter, blogs and webinars to link with women across NSW to hear their issues, use their wisdom and

build networks. How different from the 1994 Rural Women's Satellite Project which at that time was seen as cutting edge technology!

We have been privileged to have worked with so many extraordinary women who formed part of the **Rural Women's Council** (formerly State Advisory Committee). Their commitment, wisdom and common sense has helped to shape the RWN into what it is today and they all need to be thanked for their contributions (see page 34 for an Honour Roll recognising past RWC chairs and members.)

We have published three books—*Daring to Dream* 1&2 which continue to provide inspiration to readers through women's stories of using innovation and tenacity to overcome rural and regional barriers to achieve goals. And a decade ago for Year of the Outback we hit the road to collect stories and images to create a beautiful coffee table book. *Living Out Back: People of Western NSW* truly celebrates the outback spirit and the book was recognised with a national printing award.

A project that has been dear to my heart since we kicked it off in 2001 is SOFT (**Shaping Our Futures Together**). These two-day grassroots leadership workshops have been delivered to nearly 1000 women across 63 locations, from homestead lounge rooms, country halls, pub dining rooms and even a church!

Rural women continue to work behind the scenes in their communities or in more visible



The very first edition of The Country Web, produced in Autumn 1993, got its name through a competition won by Marion Palmer from Jerilderie. This was Marion's winning entry:

'The arms of the web provide the framework around which the fragile thread is spun, thus linking everything together with the end result a delicate but strong and flexible work of art. To me, this resembles what the RWN is all about—connecting people in far flung areas and drawing them all together through the newsletter.'

roles to ensure their industries thrive. Our 10+ year involvement in coordinating the **RIRDC Rural Women's Award** in NSW has seen extraordinary women take centre stage and be recognised.

Closer to home the annual **Hidden Treasures Honour Roll**, started in 2010, is also putting the spotlight annually on women who are making a difference through their selfless giving as local volunteers in a range of areas. We salute you all. (See page 25 for more about this project).

The RWN received a Premiers Public Sector Silver Award as a team member of **TAFE Western's Distance Learning Satellite Project** delivering SOFT workshops over 10 challenging weeks to women in the outback without them having to leave their homes.

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RIRDC RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD

The RIRDC Rural Women's Award is Australia's pre-eminent Award for rural women. Since 2000, the Award has recognised women's vital contribution to primary industries and rural communities.

The Award identifies emerging leaders and change agents and supports their development as leaders and their ongoing contribution to their industry and community, by providing financial assistance, mentoring and support.

Women's representation and involvement in primary industries is increasing with many occupying high level positions across a variety of sectors—the goal of the Award is to further harness and develop women's capacity to shape and influence the future of rural Australia.

Over 75 percent of the 170 Award recipients have successfully pursued high level leadership roles since participating in this Award.

A businesswoman who's made a career out of helping farmers through succession planning complexities and an author who has spent 25 years in the rural fire industry are finalists in the 2013 NSW–ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award.

Making the announcement in February, Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hogkinson said both Isobel Knight and Vivien Thomson are strong examples of women who live and work in rural NSW but have a national focus. They are innovative and extremely committed to applying twenty-first century techniques to benefit rural communities and primary industries.

The winner of the 2013 Award will be announced on 26 March at a special Ministerial Gala Dinner being held at Parliament House, Sydney.

The NSW–ACT winner will receive a bursary of \$10 000 and both the winner and runner-up will complete the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course and be supported to develop and implement a 12 month leadership plan.

The NSW–ACT winner will also compete for the national Australian RIRDC Rural Women's Award to be announced in October in Canberra.

Apply for the 2014 Award

Rural women interested in applying for the 2014 Award should contact the Rural Women's Network for more information and to access mentors. Applications for 2014 will open 1 August and close in October 2013 (date to be advised).

You can find out more at:
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn/rirdc

2013 NSW–ACT finalists



Isobel Knight
LOOMBERAH
(NEAR TAMWORTH)

Isobel grew up on her family's farm near Junee before marrying and moving to Northern NSW where she and her husband Rod run a cattle grazing enterprise. Isobel, a mother of three has degrees in business law and

psychology and is a trained counsellor and mediator.

Being part of two family farms and experiencing firsthand the challenges of planning for the future has been the catalyst for Isobel's interest in farm succession planning. She works with farming families to navigate their way through the complexity that arises when seeking to balance personal expectations, viability, and fairness. This is often complicated by varying degrees of financial and operational understanding for those on and off the farm.

In 2004 Isobel (with her then partner Sarah Roche) established proAGtive—the only business in Australia purely focusing on family farm business succession

planning. She has worked closely with more than 400 farming families and continues to deliver targeted workshops to farmers all over Australia. Many have now been helped to prepare succession plans that ensure strong and viable futures while more importantly preserving family relationships.

Isobel believes every family farm business needs a plan, but only about 10 per cent seek help to formulate one. She would use the Award bursary to develop a user-friendly online succession planning platform that is affordable, accessible and flexible to meet the needs of today's farming families.

Isobel hopes to inspire farming families to start the succession planning process and believes this will see more young people return to family farm businesses — helping to sustain and create stronger, more vibrant rural communities.



Vivien Thomson AFSM
MUTTAMA
(NEAR COOTAMUNDRA)

Vivien and partner Robert run three mixed farming enterprises at Muttama in the South West Slopes. Along with caring for three children still at home, Vivien runs an Executive Coaching business, has just

completed the Australian Rural Leadership Program and is Vice President of Australian Women in Agriculture.

Working in the rural fire industry for over 25 years, Vivien has worked as Captain, Incident Controller, Trainer and Mentor. She was the first female in the ACT to be awarded the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal. She is also the recipient of an International Women's Day Award.

Vivien has a strong commitment to primary industries and rural communities. She believes rural women have valuable roles to play and is passionate about encouraging and helping them to reach their goals and become change agents within their industry.

Vivien wants to improve circumstances for women within the rural fire service and their communities by further developing their confidence and skills to empower them to take up valued leadership roles. She believes if women are better prepared and confident they will be better able to engage with government and emergency service agencies around the issue of fire preparedness, response and recovery.

She would use the bursary to develop a leadership toolbox for women in the rural fire community to develop skills and feel confident to take on more leadership roles. Vivien hopes her toolbox model could be further developed across industry to grow and harness the potential of women and increase their engagement in community leadership positions.



... across my desk *continued*

Many of you may have travelled on the convoys of buses to Dubbo in 2007 to join 750 participants attending a very special **International Women's Day** celebration the RWN coordinated for drought-affected women.

Some readers may have been fortunate to attend one of the **World Congresses of Rural Women**. I played a small role on the organising team that hosted the inaugural event in Melbourne in 1994 and was blown away. Congresses were later held in Spain, Washington and South Africa. I am proud to say that NSW rural women were represented at all these events.

In 2004 we worked with the ABC and two other States to provide information and strategies for farming families tackling succession planning. **The In-Laws** radio broadcasts helped to get these important messages across large distances to diverse audiences.

There have been so many innovative activities RWN has been involved in over the past 20 years including the **You Choose** dairy video, **Rural Women's Memoirs Project**, **Luncheon on the Plains** arts project and the **Team Up & Prosper** women in decision making forum.

I even got to meet Bill Clinton, Princess Anne, Queen Noor of Jordan, Prince Phillip and 1000s of you inspirational rural women living and working across Australia—all in the line of 'duty'. I reckon I must have had the best job in the world and I continue to personally value your friendship and support.

As I gaze over my veranda here in Orange I see a very different view to the farm where I grew up in Northern NSW. There we looked across a valley to the magnificent Macpherson ranges and the Queensland border. This rural vista has been replaced with a more suburban view featuring a huge gumtree, a flag pole, veggie plot, neighbours gardens and the spire of Orange's Uniting church in the distance.

From March 2013 my veranda view will again change as my husband and I embark on a year of volunteering on the island of Tonga. So Malo from me and have a dazzling 2013!

SONIA MUIR



Time well spent

By Sue Chapman, Hillston

Mama Ramotswe muses in *The Double Comfort Safari Club*, from the series *The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall-Smith ... *'The world was an imperfect place, but, there were many times of quietitude and contentment, and this place and this moment on the verandah was one such.'* ... and I must say I have to agree with her. I have been fortunate enough this year to have more time on the verandah and to do more reading.

I first came across this series at my mother's but was further encouraged to read the whole 12 books by our friend Judy, as we sat under the trees in the grounds of Government House during a visit to Sydney, and what a wonderful treasure they have been. If I had done nothing else this year it would have been time well spent.

So began my Christmas letter as I reflected on my first year in Hillston. We had moved just before Australia Day 2011, feeling exhilarated by the prospect of change and new opportunities. As Principal, my husband Steve was entitled to the house near the school, a 1926 weatherboard with a verandah on three sides. It was a house of the type I had longed to live in.

The verandah and the town have been all we expected and much more we didn't!

Despite the misgivings of people who feared there would be little for us to do in a small town, we found plenty to do—more than we could do. We became increasingly involved in the life of the town and revelled in it. We loved the house and where it was, tucked away beside the school, shielded from sight by cool trees and at the end of town, overlooking an open paddock. In that direction the nearest neighbour is 12 km away. On the northern side we have the best neighbour's in the world. We were welcomed from the very first hour, invited to dinner and loaned a bed to replace our blow up mattress until all our furniture arrived. Friends met that first night became firmer friends and introduced us to still more friends and places to go and things to do.

During that first year, once I had everything in place in the house and had been introduced to most of the town, I had a lot of time on the verandah. Every time I sat to survey the view and soak in the atmosphere I was refreshed! I started planning verandah time into my day.

Many good books were read, many letters were written, many conversations were had and many more cups of tea were consumed on that verandah.

When I wasn't on the verandah I had the chance to experience things I had never done before—like kayaking at first light on the Lachlan (old friends thought I'd had a personality transplant!) I caught 354 mice from the house during the first summer and became adept at filling and emptying the traps without turning a hair. (Maybe I did have a personality transplant!?) I joined the quilting and art group, the bible study group and the book club. I gardened.

As time progresses I learn more about living in a town like Hillston but my initial impressions of the town and the wonderful people who live here have not changed. I never get over the adventures to be had in living here, the strong sense of community and the humour and resilience of the people.

In a small, reasonably isolated town, things are either very convenient—two minutes from one side of town to the other with a car park waiting outside where you want to go, always someone to talk to down the street, or very inconvenient—over an hour to Griffith for major shopping, dental and extra medical, six hours to our nearest family and nine to the others, in three different directions!

The trick is to accept the difficulties as the longterm locals do and find a way around them, and just love where you are.

What's not to love? You can turn up at the quilting group, The Dusty Quilters, on a hot summer's day and be made part of the group just by being there and melting with everyone else for three hours.

You can volunteer in the local Red Dust and Paddy Melon Gallery and Information centre and meet half the world as it drives through Hillston and you can meet the other, younger half of the world at the Backpackers BBQ in the Lion's park as they complete the cherry harvest.

You can use old learning in new ways—transferring skills from being a high school English teacher to being a Kindy volunteer mum or teaching adult literacy or helping out in church, where everyone pitches in to make it happen in the absence of a paid minister or even working with the Rural Chaplain, helping out editing grants and typing blogs of her adventures.

You can shop at Sharon's 'Country Threads' which isn't a large shop but everything she has seems to be just what you want. Walk into the butchers at lunch time to buy the best meat, ham and eggs and you might just get lunch there too. IGA has everything else you need (and they carry it out for you) and if John and Lisa spot you in the Post Office they hurry out to get the parcel you weren't home to sign for when they did the mail run.

Friends haven't addressed the mail correctly? No worries, Lisa and Tara know where you live and get it to you anyway.

You can spend time drinking tea and contemplating the next artwork to be produced and whether you will be able to do a successful portrait of your brother's dog or should you do the abstract based on the cedar tree you had in mind?

And best of all you can wake at dawn to see the sun rise across the paddock through the french doors and run out onto the verandah and take a picture of the dawn light as it shines through the trees.

Segenhoe View

By Helen Walker, Scone NSW

In 2000, after deregulation of the dairy industry, my husband made a wise decision to say 50 years is enough! We both had good health and strength and neither could see him being happy to sit around, so the decision was made to sell the dairy block on the Segenhoe valley floor and exploit our dry run across The Pages River.

We created a purpose-built B&B on the new farm to share with travelers from all walks of life. Eight years on we thoroughly enjoy welcoming a kaleidoscope of visitors to our home and we have not had a guest we wouldn't love to return.

I completed a TAFE course in hospitality and my culinary skills combined with fresh garden produce provides challenges and accolades. It is surprising how many people who have never seen a fig tree, nor asparagus growing enjoy exploring our little patch. 'Why do fresh strawberries taste so different?' they often ask.

We now cater for local birthdays, club meetings, Christmas dinners, family gatherings—for our own 22 offspring, with a long table to seat everyone. We also enjoy hosting the 'neighbour breakfast' each year on the Sunday before Christmas with seven adjoining properties.

Our new garden has been a challenge, especially through the drought. My husband's 'rock walls' never cease to amaze both guests and neighbours.

My husband loves the history of our valley as it was the first Upper Hunter outpost in the colony. He loves to drive guests around sharing the history and viewing the 11 thoroughbred studs within five km of our home.

The view towards Denman, a vista of 60 km, changes daily and is a WOW factor for all to share. Breakfast on this front verandah, with a power point for the kettle, often continues into lunch!

We are so glad we executed 'the plan' and are enjoying the daily challenges and commitment.

Singing beyond my verandah

By Tania Barrett, Winmalee

I have always loved singing but have never taken the opportunity nor had the confidence to join a choir.

My only singing audition was in first year high school. I had a hoarse throat from a cold, but was desperate to be involved in everything so growled my way through the Olivia Newton John classic—Banks of the Ohio. Needless to say my public singing career was not launched and promptly went into mothballs.

Fast forward to 2011 and the Rural Women's Gathering at Gloucester, where my dormant desire to sing outside the confines of my own home was given another opportunity. I took part in a singing workshop and had a wonderful three hours of heavy breathing, stretching, lip rolling, scales and singing.

We even had a 'gig' that weekend at the Sunday Gathering ecumenical service singing Hallelujah. This one word hymn provided much mirth from family and friends who ribbed me on how long it took to learn the lyrics. In my workshop choir's defense, the song did involve some intricate melodies and harmonies which everyone agreed sounded magical.

For some of us it was the first time we had ever sung in public and the feeling was fantastic.

I am proud to say after seeing a choir advertisement in our local paper with the magic words 'no audition required', I am now part of a local singing group. I have also progressed well beyond my one word repertoire and last August my choir performed five songs at the Blackheath Choir Festival.

I have no plans to go further with my new found singing career and can confirm I haven't had any calls from the Sydney Opera House or La Scala in Milan but I would like to thank the organisers of the Gloucester workshop for giving me the confidence to revisit a childhood dream.

AUTUMN COMES TO THE NEW ENGLAND

Currawongs and magpies call,
horses whinny, red leaves fall,
changing scenes that show us how
Autumn steals in to endow
every acre with its glory
unfolding this season's story.

© HELEN BELL, GYMEA

MY COUNTRY LIFE

I left the city to live a quiet life
But after almost 20 years my life is busier than ever!
I love the night sky, I love the country smells
I love the vege patch, and I love my delightful chooks!
I wish I had time to read a book
I wish I could find a bloke—surely I'm a good catch
I wish I had time for Church and listening to the bells
I wish! I wish! My oh my
I'm happy to be in the country and want to stay forever
This is my life ... and I love it!

© SHARON BURKE, STROUD

ONE FARM DAY

stories from behind the farm gate

One Farm Day is a series of stories from and about life beyond the farm gate. From shearers to fruit pickers and beekeepers; highs, lows, mud, dust and all, we visit men and women working in all kinds of jobs and tell the story of their farming day.



ANNA WONG & JERRY MOUZAKIS have been farming olives and Chinese red dates in the NSW central west for almost 20 years. They also run one of regional Australia's most awarded restaurants and so rely on farming not only for their own income but also to supply their restaurant with fresh produce.

Having grown up in her parents' Chinese restaurant and Sydney's market gardens, Anna was perhaps destined to make her livelihood through growing and cooking her own produce. And Jerry, with his Greek heritage and childhood spent in and around his family's Sydney seafood shop, always had a natural curiosity about how, when and where things grow best.

In 1994 the couple were leading busy lives in Sydney—Jerry was teaching and Anna, who had trained as an industrial chemist and then retrained to be an accountant, was putting in long office hours. They started to dream of moving out west and having a tree change.

Jerry was keen to move somewhere with a similar climate to Leftkas, the Greek Island where his family grows olives and Chinese red dates.

He planned to do the same in Australia and eventually found a block of land just out of Cowra.

While it was climatically perfect, their land was lacking infrastructure and improvements. So with a baby in tow and limited farming experience they set to work planting over 3000 trees, including 1500 olive trees, an orchard of Chinese red dates, quinces and blood oranges. They also regenerated a pocket of the farm into a wildlife sanctuary.

'In the early days we kept our jobs in Sydney and visited the farm on weekends. Our son Ari was a newborn and we'd arrive exhausted most Friday nights and then wake on Saturday to knee-high grass and a mountain of work. It just wasn't manageable.'

Giving up their steady 'white-collar' jobs for farming they knew they'd be taking a financial hit but, as Jerry says, 'we were making a very conscious lifestyle choice'. The first few years were full of challenges and soon they realised they wouldn't be able to get by on income from the small farm alone.

'When we first moved there was a roadside stall near our house. It belonged to a local Japanese family and they sold the most beautiful, aromatic white peaches. Jerry and I would often say; somebody should put produce like that on a plate so one day we decided we would.'

In 2000 Anna and Jerry bought a small building at the bottom of Cowra's main street and opened Neila, the restaurant that was to earn them accolades from food media around Australia and become a destination for anyone interested in food. Since opening 14 years ago, Anna and Jerry have worked the restaurant every single night of service. If they can't be there, they don't open. It's this level of dedication that has delivered them such a dedicated following.

In addition to the restaurant, Anna teaches cooking workshops at the farm, does catering and works throughout summer to preserve fruit from their orchard and surrounding growers. Jerry can generally be found in the olive grove, on a tractor or elsewhere on their productive little property.

Their dates and olives did of course find a permanent place on the Neila menu, as did those white peaches and other local produce. But, as Jerry says, 'while we are lucky enough to be surrounded by beautiful fresh fruit and vegetables, nearly all of our smaller 'protein' producers have disappeared over the past 10 years. From rabbits to ducks and trout, they've all gone. Maybe it's economies of scale or distance to Sydney markets. Whatever the reason it's very sad.'

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FARM MANAGER WENDY BOWMAN believes that to be successful in farming, you need to be educated and connected. Although she grew up on a farm, it took many years before she could call the paddock her work place.

'When I left school, farming was never presented to girls as a career option. So instead I finished school and enrolled in a three-year Graduate Program with Grace Bros.'

Soon after completing that program Wendy was ready to leave Sydney behind and took a job in Parkes managing the local Grace

Bros home-wares division. Now fast forward to Wendy's 30th birthday and the year she finally decided to switch careers and become a fulltime farmer.

The first step was to enrol in a Farm Management course via the University of Sydney's then Orange campus. It took six years to complete her Advanced Diploma in Farm Management, and along the way she met and married her husband Rob. They now live at Cargo where he farms and Wendy commutes to her job as Farm Manager on Liscombe Pools, a 2750 acre property tucked down in a beautiful valley between Canowindra and Mandurama.

TODD FERGUSSON and his wife Sara live near Dunedoo in western NSW. And while they have been running cattle for many years, began grazing chickens 12 months ago. They are one of a few farming families in Australia producing 'pastured' eggs on a commercial scale. This means the chickens graze in open paddocks playing a key role in a cycle of rotational farming that results not only in a daily harvest of beautiful eggs but also richer natural pastures to feed the cattle herd.

Sold under the Farmer Brown label, 'we have made a point of distancing ourselves from the label *free range* because some eggs branded as such come from chickens who are locked up for up to 23 hours a day and aren't free to scratch for bugs and insects.' In contrast, Todd's chickens are free to roam in an open paddock all day.

The farm which was never intended for chickens had been operating solely as a shorthorn cattle stud since 1949. And while Todd grew up here, he hadn't planned to make a career of farming. Instead he went to university in Armidale and then moved to Sydney where he worked in finance. He and Sara met at a country picnic race meet and decided to move back to the farm when his parents retired. The couple had begun their own family and a move to the country seemed like a good idea.

Todd became interested in rotational grazing systems and this led to the idea of bringing in chickens to naturally fertilise the paddocks and replenish the soil. Twelve months on and the egg business is breaking even but Todd says the real profit is in their improved pastures. 'We don't buy fertiliser these days and you can really see a difference in the paddocks with richer natural pastures.'

The 1200 chickens are moved about 30 metres every week and it will take almost one year for them to cover a 200 acre paddock. Divided amongst five portable sheds, the chickens are protected by

maremma sheep dogs which Todd says are indispensable and really quite amazing. 'Sometimes they wander around and find each other during the day but they always gravitate back to their own chickens and constantly have one eye trained on them. As night falls the dogs herd their wards back into the portable sheds and take care of any foxes that are hanging around.'

So the cattle are happy because they have improved pastures to graze, Todd is happy because he has lovely eggs to sell and lower farm input costs, and their customers are happy because the eggs are something quite special. But that's not to say that it's not all smooth sailing.

'The eggs are labour intensive and not hugely profitable. We spend up to 5 hours a day with the chickens, moving their 'caravans', checking water, then collecting eggs and grading and packing them.'

But it seems that all this work is well worth it. Diversifying into eggs has given the family a lifestyle angle to their farming that not only Todd and Sara love but also their children, Fergus 7, and Alice 5.

'It's great to see the kids walking through the paddocks, checking the chickens, their water and eggs. I love how involved they are from such an early age.'

The Fergusson family is now a popular fixture at the Mudgee Farmers Market where they sell not only eggs but also bacon, egg and rocket rolls which are for many, a market essential.

So it's clear that Farmer Brown's eggs come from very lucky chooks but what about the quality of the eggs themselves? Todd explains that pastured eggs can contain up to 20 times more Omega-3 than eggs from caged chickens, 'but statistics aside, they honestly do taste better and when you crack one of our eggs in a bowl you can tell they are special.'

'I quite like not living and working on the same farm. It's good to be able to turn off at the end of the day and drive away. Not many farmers have that separation between work and home, so I consider myself lucky!'

As for her studies, the most important skill Wendy says she learnt at university was, 'to constantly question everything you do on the farm. Farming technology is ever-changing so I am always asking myself; are we doing this the best way and how can we do it better. Just because a farm has been managed a certain way for 50 years doesn't mean that's still best,' she says.

Luckily Wendy's father, and now colleague, has been open to and enthusiastic about these changes.

'Dad has been great. Soon after I came back we got rid of the sheep and cropping to concentrate on our Angus herd. We figured out that the three different enterprises (sheep, crops, cattle), were clashing and spreading our resources too thinly. Already the bloodline has improved, we are getting higher prices for calves and the farm itself is healthier and more productive.'

Despite having her diploma in Farm Management Wendy enrolls in workshops and programs run by the local Landcare or NSW DPI

field officers, attends field days, participates in online forums, takes e-courses and recently finished a Grazing for Profit and Holistic Farming course.

'It can be hard to set time aside to take a course or go to a field day but I think it's important to make the effort.'

Wendy believes email has made a huge difference to the farming community. 'It's perfect for farmers because most of us have dodgy phone reception during the day and it can be hard to track each other down. With email you can connect whenever it suits, catch up on correspondence and get organised without worrying about phone range.'

A member of Midwest Angus Association, Wendy says the group runs pretty much all of its affairs via email, allowing everyone to participate wherever they are based and whatever their work hours.

Wendy is a seriously impressive woman and a great role-model for young women with dreams of getting into farming as a career.

'There's nothing a woman can't do on a farm, and there are some things we do better than men too! You just need know your stuff and have the right gear.'



By Ruby Summer Newell, Cobargo, Aged 10

I lie in the grass, the soft moss tickles my cheeks. I look up at the canopy of trees above me, leaves spiral down on to my face. They shine in the sun like falling stars. I breathe in the sweet fragrance of the flowers caressing my head. The world is a beautiful place. I listen to the birds chirping in the trees, they sound like little silver bells. A light mist hovers over the trees. Tiny specks of water settle on my face. I smile to myself and get to my feet.

I walk down a rocky path that leads to the creek. There is a low, stoney wall covered with green, scratchy moss. It is slippery, but I have to climb it to get to the creek. I rest my left foot on the first rock and reach up with my right hand to grasp a low hanging willow branch for balance. A bird swoops over my head, I think it was a magpie. It drops a beautiful black and white feather on the ground. I pick it up, examine it and put it in my pocket. There are three other things in there too; an orange shell, a beautiful butterfly wing spotted with red and a stone that fits perfectly in the palm of my hand.

I finally reach the top of the wall, going down is much easier than going up. I would usually slide down on my bottom but it is too wet right now. It's just as fun climbing down.

I can see the creek ahead of me, it sparkles in the sun like the night sky full of stars. It would be lovely to swim in right now. I walk down a stretch of sandy ground towards it, grass tickles my feet and branches whip my face but I don't care. When I get to the bank I sit down on a rock and close my eyes. I listen to the water trickling over the stones. The birds are singing in the trees, the frogs are croaking their sweet melody and the fish are gurgling in the stream.

The world is a beautiful place.



How to build a Health Plan with your doctor

It's important to develop and maintain a good working relationship with your main doctor in life, who is normally a GP but can also include any number of specialist doctors that we become involved with through our life. Sometimes men may wonder what things they need to tell their doctors or what might be more indicative of a larger problem. Women are more familiar with the health system as they spend more time with doctors discussing their problems and children's issues. So we are not meant to naturally know how best to get on with our doctor.

You should find a GP who provides care that is scientific, considerate and compassionate. You need to stay in control of your health by fully understanding the nature of any health problem and the mechanisms and potential hazards of treatments or side effects of drugs. Don't hesitate to ask questions or request more consultations for complicated problems. Try to develop an overall Health Plan with your doctor—most men have a maintenance plan for their car or computer so why not develop a health plan with your doctor to increase your chances of maintaining a long and healthy life.

If you have a good working relationship with your doctor it helps to make sure that you're being as open as you can be and presenting all information in a way that your doctor can use effectively. It's a two way street—your doctor isn't a 'mind reader'—keep him or her informed of what's happening for you.

When consulting a doctor present a detailed and well organised account of symptoms and relevant past history. Before you arrive at the doctor's you might want to write down symptoms and history, current medications and dosages, plus any questions or things you want to talk about. If there's more than one problem begin with the most important one. Bring your concerns up early in your visit and take notes as it is easy to forget key information if you are feeling unwell.

Some men have been raised to be self-reliant and to conceal weakness and pain as they think showing and talking about this is unmanly. Your doctor is there to help you and needs to know what is going on—so talking about all your symptoms, feelings and providing him with accurate pain levels is the sensible way to go. Don't minimise your symptoms as this makes it much harder for a doctor to effectively assess and treat you. Be honest and build your health plan together with your doctor.

Greg Millan is a Men's Health Consultant. To contact Greg phone/sms 0417 772 390, email: greg@menshealthservices.com.au or see www.menshealthservices.com.au

ONE FARM DAY

x
stories from behind the farm gate



MARY HOWARD – FISHERWOMAN & INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

The expression still waters run deep is pretty perfect for a woman like Mary Howard. On the surface she is a smart, friendly and hard-working fisherwoman with a strong family focus. But dig a little deeper and there's a lot more going on.

Mary is a commercial wild harvest fisherwoman on Sydney's Hawkesbury River. With her husband Graham, they trawl for prawns up and down the river right outside their house every weekday morning during prawn season.

Some mornings they will bring back as much as 100 kg of prawns, others will be much lighter, as few as 25 kg. 'Some days the prawns will be right outside the mooring, others we travel up the river for up to an hour to find them.' And how do they know where to look? 'It becomes an instinct,' Mary says. The Howards have been living and fishing here for over 30 years, so by now they know the river and its prawns pretty well.

Mary grew up in Liverpool where her parents had a market garden.

As a child she would help get the produce ready for market and spend afternoons and holidays chipping cauliflower, parsnip, lettuce and other vegetables.

After finishing school in Year 10 she worked with her family until marrying Graham and moving to the Georges River. Graham was working for a boat builder and was establishing his own boat building business. His boss had an order to build a fishing boat for the Hawkesbury River. He became friends with the owner and was asked to visit the Hawkesbury and go fishing with the new boat owner. 'We fell in love with the place,' Mary says, 'and 30 years later we still love it!'

Mary had always taken an interest in land and water management and had of course, a vested interest in the future sustainability of the fisheries industry that was her family and community's livelihood. So 14 years ago she decided to get involved, really involved.

She enrolled in an aquaculture course with Grafton TAFE. She completed the course by correspondence giving her

a swag of excellent practical knowledge that was directly applicable to her daily fishing work, and a set of writing and research skills that enabled her to begin producing papers on issues she was passionate about.

Since then she has authored four papers and presented them at conferences around Australia, has been a Director of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority, is working on a new paper and is also considering a book. On top of this Mary is the National President of Women's Industry Network Seafood Community (WINSC).

Mary has become a strong voice for Australia's commercial fisheries and an advocate of their sustainability and development. 'I have a lot to say and I want to be heard,' Mary says, 'but I realised that if you are going to be heard you need to get involved. You need to be educated and reasonable, and you need to present well.'

And so, in addition to her more academic pursuits, Mary has also taken public speaking courses, completed the Australian Institute of Company Director's Course and more recently has undertaken a course in media training. In 2010 her research and practical fisheries work awarded Mary the Sydney Fish Market's excellence in environmental practice award.

Mary's first paper, *Aquatic ecosystem productivity relies on water managers and sustainable cities*, was a convincing argument against the pressure placed on wild harvest fishers. 'I thought it was time the rest of the community realised the effect they too have on our waterways, from recreational fishing to every day water use;

people just don't understand the collective impact that all water use has on the productivity of our aquatic ecosystems.'

Mary argues that the wild harvest fishing industry in NSW is consistently being challenged yet constantly meeting those challenges. 'We keep adjusting and have established that this is a sustainable industry, but still policy and the community primarily focus on sustainability, and 'wild harvest fishers' are always the target.'

The commercial wild harvest fishing industry is shrinking. Forty years ago there were over 6000 commercial fishers in NSW and today they number less than 1200. Mary says there is no incentive for anybody to enter this industry, 'we see incidences of suicide at the extreme end, and across the board fishers are discouraging their children to join the industry.'

Of Mary and Graham's three children, one son is working as a commercial prawn fisherman and another was in the industry but has moved to another sector after an injury. Their daughter works in real estate.

All her working life, Mary has been involved in family businesses; from helping her parents run their market garden to working alongside her husband in their business. 'Family is the driving force for everything I do,' she says.

After taking an owner builder course Mary is now renovating the house to provide more room for family gatherings. She drafted up drawings and had full plans drawn up, then submitted them to council. Now she is not only running a business, researching and continuing her advocacy work but also renovating a house.

ONE FARM DAY

stories from behind the farm gate

DARCY CALLAN – BEEKEEPER

It's the first week of spring and the Central Tablelands are marked by pockets of blazing yellow and strips of emerald green. Canola, wheat, barley lucerne and pasture crops are beginning to stir with the warmer weather. This is the time for bees to get busy.

Cudal-based beekeeper Darcy Callan moved his 200 hives to one of the area's biggest canola farms just last week. Darcy (66), who has sustained up to 400 stings in just one day, is pretty pragmatic about this side of his profession, 'a bee sting might hurt for a few minutes but it won't kill you. Besides, the more stings you get the more your immunity builds.'

Visiting Darcy and his bees is a fascinating if somewhat painful experience. 'This time of year is about as busy as it gets. The fields are full of pollen and there's loads of honey coming in every day.' Right now, Darcy's

worker bees are bringing in honey around the clock. Depositing their haul in the honeycomb where it is matured overnight and then sealed with a wax cap, 'I need to be constantly emptying the combs or they'll fill up too quickly—that's when the bees will swarm and take off.'

Every day during Spring, Darcy drives the 3 km from home to the hives. His truck carries empty boxes and a small forklift. When he arrives, Darcy pulls on protective clothing, stuffs an old smoker with hay, sets it alight and heads into the fray.

Working up to 14 hours a day at the moment, Darcy's days are filled with harvesting, extracting and bottling honey before travelling to farmer's markets in Sydney most weekends to sell his product. It's non-stop.

Darcy came to beekeeping late in his working life. He's spent many years driving trucks and then worked in the

community before being lured into the secret life of bees. 'We were living in Orange and our neighbour was keeping bees. I would watch and help him care for the hives. Gradually I built up my own and learnt the business as I went.'

Darcy's bees will stay in this canola field for three weeks before he drives them 20 min to a cherry orchard near Cargo. He will receive a pollination fee to keep them here for up to a month before returning the bees to Cudal where they'll 'work' a paddock full of Paterson's Curse and yellow box. Here they'll stay until after Christmas and then it's a matter of chasing the flowers and eucalyptus blossoms until winter.

'The bigger beekeepers keep their hives going all year round. They drive further and further west to find yellowbox and wildflowers for their bees but I can't justify the costs and time away so the bees and I have a

break over winter.' At the end of May he reduces his hives down to just one box and they all stay home until late August.

Darcy's 200 hives produce about 1500 L of honey a year, impressive when you consider that it takes 300 bees about three weeks to gather 450 g of honey.

When asked about the theory that the world's bee population is under threat from Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), Darcy is philosophical. 'CCD has been an issue as long as beekeeping has been a profession. It's part of the natural cycle. Every year we can loose up to 10 per cent of our hives, sometimes more sometimes less.' What he will say is that a world without bees would last only five years. 'All I know is that we need to be careful of our bees and be absolutely spot on with our biosecurity.'

To Darcy, the ageing population of beekeepers is just as pressing an issue. 'Without beekeepers you don't have a honey industry and without the honey industry you don't have bees to pollinate orchards and other plants and trees.' He guesses that the average age for beekeepers in Australia would be 60 and worries there aren't enough incentives to draw more young people into this sector of Australian farming. 'The work is hard, the hours are long and it can be expensive to get set up. But working with bees gives you a daily glimpse into one of the most interesting social structures in nature. It's never boring.'

... continued from page 10

Anna points out that it's not just small farmers finding times tough, the region's wineries have also suffered plenty of knockbacks. But in spite of the comings and goings surrounding Anna and Jerry, their own farm and restaurant survives and moves forward. Why? 'Maybe because we really love what we are doing so we're

prepared to make sacrifices and work around the clock to keep it ticking,' says Jerry. Anna suggests it's because their approach to farming life and the restaurant is essentially very simple and down to earth; 'we use basic ingredients, avoid trends, serve what we love to eat and enjoy the support of our local community.'



Photo: iDrinksMart winners—a creative project run in 2012 with students from High Schools in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

DrugInfo website | www.druginfo.adf.org.au

eheadspace | For kids 12-25. Talk to someone and get advice about tough issues | www.eheadspace.org.au | 1800 650 890

Kids Helpline | 24/7 counselling for kids 5-25 | www.kidshelp.com.au | 1800 55 1800

Lifeline | Support and advice in personal crisis | www.lifeline.org.au | 13 11 14

Although a range of factors influence alcohol use by teens, most parents are surprised to learn that they can play a critical role in introducing children to alcohol and discouraging early or excessive use. Research shows that children who first use alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to abuse alcohol than those who first use alcohol at age 21 or older. Here's some tips when trying to set limits on alcohol use.

Adolescence

As children approach adolescence, friends and 'fitting in' become extremely important. Teenagers tend to question the boundaries laid down by their parents and start to look to friends and the media for clues on how to behave. As a result of these changes there can often be conflict between parents and children. This can be a difficult time and provides a challenge for parents who have to try to respect their child's growing desire for independence while still providing support and appropriate limits.

Develop a good relationship

The best way to influence your child's use of alcohol is to have a good relationship with them. Research shows teenagers are more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with their parent/guardian. If you have a good relationship with your child you'll be in a better position to protect them if they begin to drink.

Good reasons not to drink

Tell them why you don't want them to drink alcohol. Explain the dangerous situations they can get into, such as accidental injuries, violent behaviours and risky sexual behaviour. Describe the negative physical effects on their health and appearance e.g. liver damage, heart and blood disorders, brain damage and damage to reproductive organs. Appeal to their self-respect—explain that alcohol might cause them to do something embarrassing that will damage their self-respect and their friendships.

Make your position clear

Setting up and enforcing limits on teenagers isn't easy. You need to make clear limits, whether it's that you don't want them to drink alcohol before the legal age or that they must only drink at home when you're there. Adolescents are less likely to use alcohol if their parents have established clear boundaries.

It's a good idea to discuss the boundaries with your teenager before anything happens. With younger teenagers (12–14) you may want to set the rules and clearly outline the consequences of breaking them, what the punishment will be and how it will be carried out. With older teenagers (15–17) you may want to negotiate an agreement about what is acceptable. However, if they step outside the established guidelines and you have agreed on the consequences, make sure you follow through with the action.

Set clear boundaries

It's up to you to decide the limits you're comfortable with. Some examples are:

- Teenagers will not drink alcohol until they are 18.
- Older siblings will not encourage younger siblings to drink and will not give them alcohol.
- Teenagers will not attend or stay at teen parties where alcohol is served. (The host of a party serving alcohol to people under 18 years may be breaking the law as a number of states in Australia have laws that make it an offence for a person to supply alcohol to someone who is aged under 18 on private property without parental consent.)

- Teenagers will not get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.

Being a good role model

The most important thing you can do is to set a good example about where, how and why you use alcohol. Young people are very good at identifying double standards, so being aware of how you use alcohol may help establish your credibility.

What about peer pressure?

Adolescence is a time of enormous change. They can become very insecure about themselves and are more likely to do things to try to please friends. This is a vulnerable time and you need to be supportive and prepare your child to deal with peer pressure. A way to begin discussions about alcohol may be to role-play scenarios that may occur at a party and give them examples of what they can say or do.

What to say:

- No thanks.
- I don't feel like it.
- Alcohol is not my thing.

What to do:

- 'Lose' unwanted drinks that are given to them e.g. set them down and walk away.
- Try to stay away from people who give them a hard time about not drinking.

For more information and ideas check out the resources/contacts at the top of this page.

Watch the iDrinksMart videos at <http://idrinksmart.com.au>

Source: Australian Drug Foundation 2012. www.druginfo.adf.org.au/fact-sheets/teenagers-and-alcohol-a-quick-guide-for-parents-web-fact-sheet



Dare to dream

By Vivien Thomson, Muttama

'Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.' DR SEUSS

I am a mixed farmer running three properties with my partner Robert. We have three children at home. I also run a coaching business and have just completed a Graduate Certificate in Australian Rural Leadership (ARLP) after an incredible 18 month journey. I was also named a finalists in the 2013 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award in February.

The beginning of my ARLP journey was met with trepidation. My one source of comfort was that I already knew one of the participants, Alison Macintosh, whom I had met 12 months before. Another participant, Tess Herbert from Eugowra, also contacted me once we'd been given the names of the other 29 participants. I was pleased to have someone with common ground: missing our children and wondering how they would cope at home without us. I'm pleased to say the world did not fall apart

and our families learnt a lot about themselves, as they too experienced their own journey, bringing us all much closer together.

Thanks to my sponsor, the Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry, I began the ARLP program in May 2011 with two weeks away from my family, the farm and everything I was familiar with, in a place I had always wanted to visit: The Kimberly region in WA.

Over the 18 month program I mixed with the other people on the course who have all become my best mates. These strangers are now firm friends and I know I can ring for a chat, bounce ideas off them and be confident that I will never be judged because of the experiences we shared.

I had undertaken many leadership courses over the years, especially when I worked in the fire industry, however, they never really challenged me enough—I wanted to push myself further and become better at what I did. I already knew a few women who graduated from the ARLP. They always seemed to stand out and had something about them that

was more settled and more in tune with what was happening. So I decided to apply.

They ARLP only run one course a year and usually take between 30 to 33 people each time. I figured that I would apply three times and then if I didn't get in I would look at other alternatives. I couldn't believe it when I got an interview and was accepted into the program! I remember clearly the day I walked down the drive to the mail drum and opened the letter. I had to read it twice before I believed it. Immediately I drove up the paddock to where Robert was making hay on the tractor and I began jumping up and down to get his attention. When he did finally stop and opened the tractor door I kept shouting, 'I got in, I got in, I can't believe it. I got in!' In typical farmer-style, Robert couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

My ARLP journey covered all types of subjects and connected me with so many diverse people. The program really challenged my thought processes and I learnt never to assume anything. The learning is experiential and allows you to reflect on the experiences and to challenge your way of thinking. It also provided me with a great repertoire of useful tools that I can draw from, use to support a constant move forward, and be comfortable with who I am.

One of the most incredible parts of the program is getting to know the other participants. We were all vastly different with a range of personalities, career paths and backgrounds. Being exposed to all these wonderful people created a unique space and allowed us to share what we were experiencing and constantly challenge each other's thoughts and opinions. This really consolidated our

learning and personal growth.

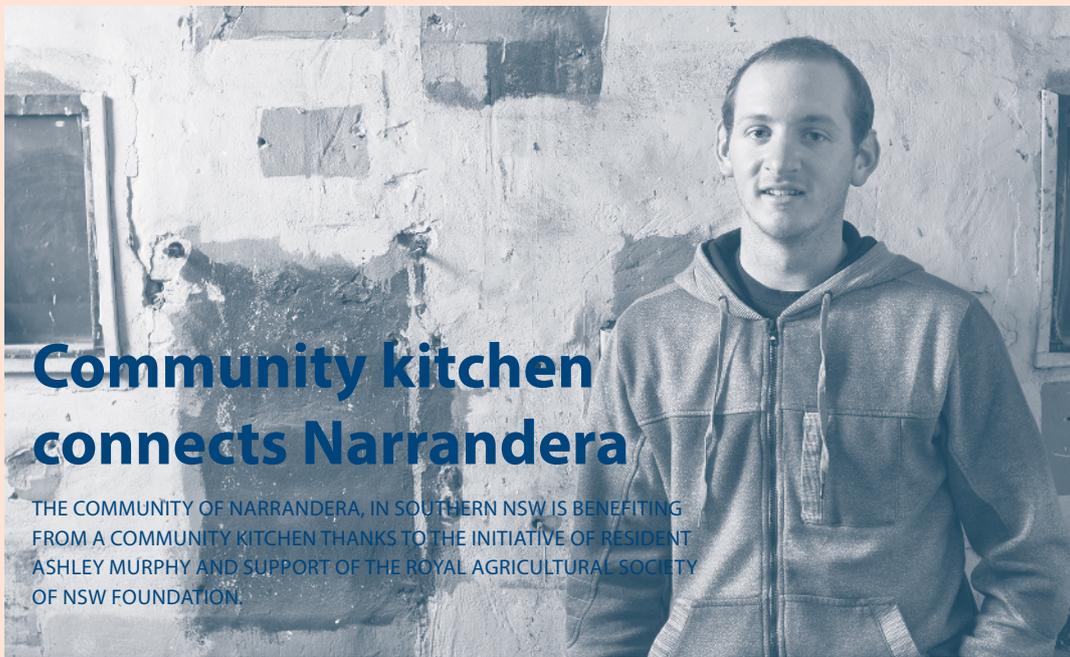
We learnt that your ability to have an impact and make contribution comes more from who you are as a person rather than what surrounds you. These drivers come from within us. This group of people saw me at my absolute best and also my worst. At no stage though did I ever feel that they judged me. They made me feel strong and respected and that my thoughts and opinions were as valued as anyone else's.

It is hard to describe exactly what the course does for you. I keep reminding myself of the people that have gone through before me and I see what amazing people they have become. I feel so fortunate to have taken part and can continue to share my learning with every step I make into the future.

The program is not about creating great leaders; it is about empowering you to be the best you can be and allowing you the space and experiences to be able to do this. We need leaders at all levels and jurisdictions across Australia and the course's strength is that it is designed specifically for rural Australia.

I would encourage you to learn more about the program. An 18 month commitment may not be for you, however, you may know someone who you could encourage to apply and have a go as I did. You never know what is around the corner. So why not look forward and relish and shape the future for rural Australia. We have such passionate, competent and visionary people in rural Australia, who could gain so much by taking the next step in their life journey.

www.rural-leaders.com.au



Community kitchen connects Narrandera

THE COMMUNITY OF NARRANDERA, IN SOUTHERN NSW IS BENEFITING FROM A COMMUNITY KITCHEN THANKS TO THE INITIATIVE OF RESIDENT ASHLEY MURPHY AND SUPPORT OF THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NSW FOUNDATION.

Ashley Murphy, a 21 year-old farm hand from Narrandera, had an idea. Greatly involved with his local community he had visions of restoring their town's community kitchen to create a healthy and positive environment for the local youth.

'I've been involved with the church youth group since I was a kid. I'm now a youth leader and through this work I've seen areas of need in the community, especially amongst young people. I really wanted to build on some of our current youth programs and that's when I thought about the kitchen idea.'

Some of the social issues facing Narrandera are financial hardship and the instance of social breakdown amongst families, often brought about by the impact of long droughts and floods. Current programs run by the church focus on instilling positive family values, developing life skills and healthy social interaction amongst children.

'The aim of the community kitchen is to improve some of the poor nutrition and irregular meal patterns that some of the kids in the community have. Simple things like sharing a

family meal, preparing meals together, and basic cooking skills are important skills for everyone to have.'

Narrandera's old community kitchen, housed in the town's old cinema as part of the local community church, was out-dated and not compliant with health and safety standards.

Demonstrating initiative beyond his years, Ashley applied for a Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Foundation (RASF) Community Futures Grant, and was successful. He was awarded \$25 000 to kick-start his project, which was completed in December 2012. After being awarded the grant Ashley was dealt another surprise. Bunnings, supplier of the large demonstration kitchens in the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, generously offered to donate the kitchen to a rural community, and there was clearly no better home for it than the Narrandera Community Kitchen project.

'I was overwhelmed with Bunnings' generous offer and the quality and size of the kitchen.'

The donated kitchen included all of the cabinets, cook tops, a

sink, oven and microwave, and a smaller outdoor kitchen. Shortly after the Show the kitchens were packed and freighted to Narrandera, where they have now been installed.

'The kitchen is really modern. It's such an improvement on what we had before; it just looks great.'

With the RASF's \$25 000 grant Ashley and his team were able to replace the rusty roof on the hall that houses the kitchen, as well as reline the walls and install lighting and a new floor. The kitchen was officially opened on 19 February 2013 by Michael Milner, Chair of the RAS Foundation.

Despite the project idea coming from Ashley, the humble man is quick to point out it has been a team effort. He says the project has brought many people from across the community together, from the youth group, local flooring company, electrician and the entire church community.

'So many people have lent a hand and hammered a few nails, painted a wall, wired in new lighting and maneuvered the new kitchen cupboards and appliances into place. Everyone has donated their time.

Jocellin Jansson, Executive Director of the RASF, visited Ashley to see how the kitchen was coming to life. She says, 'the project is an inspiration to anyone living in a rural community. The kitchen and refurbished hall are cause for great celebration and are testament to one young man's quiet leadership, an enthusiastic committee and a community with a big heart.'

Ashley has big plans for the kitchen, including a weekly 'soup night' to provide a healthy meal for families, as well as cooking classes for young people to learn basic skills. He says the broader community will also benefit from the new facility with groups being able to use it for events such as school functions, dance classes and art festivals.

'In a small rural community such as ours, to have programs and activities that bring families together is great. I hope the kitchen will become a place for young people to come and either spend time with their families, or learn some new skills that will help them in the future.'

Ashley admits the project has also taught him some new skills and increased his self-confidence.

'It's a really good feeling to do something for your community that you know will benefit and help so many people. I encourage other young rural people to think about what they could do for their community and just have a go. It's amazing what can be achieved and the difference you can make.'

If you have an idea to revitalise your community why not apply for a RASF Community Futures Grant. For details visit: www.rasf.org.au



Wongali

By Philomoena Simmons, Nevertire

The view from my verandah is one I wouldn't change for anything. It is full of memories and Box trees.

Behind the verandah are the cattle yards built by master builders Perve and Alex Graham. These energetic men were living here while they heaved and threw sleepers around. Our third son was born at that time. Mrs Graham knitted him a pair of booties, the darling.

Adjacent to the yards is a tall hay shed. Over the years it has stored huge bales of hay and small ones. And, as is the character of hay sheds, when a space occurs it is filled by a tractor, feeder, auger, wire netting. The shed was built by local men Keith and Norman Dowton, both now building in heaven, as is the Graham family.

Our 'swimming pool' where we had many adventures is the ground tank. An electric pump brings water to the garden but still staunch on the bank stands a six foot windmill which did the work for years. The tank has seen a variety of floating vessels, or nearly floating. Many a raft, mostly incorporating 44 gallon drums, corrugated iron, and ropes were constructed by the children. One bright idea was to use the baby bath—not so successful. The tank has yielded great catches of crayfish time and time again.

Past that 'fun park' is the woolshed, used towards the end of the war for dances to raise funds. There are still little bits of crepe paper nailed to the high rafters! It was originally used by several neighbours as was a common custom, until gradually all properties had their own.

Our view always pleases, wet or dry, summer or winter. Not a scene of lush green hills, and we do not see the moon rising over the sea, not even spectacular sunsets much, but all is dear and familiar and unique.

***Not everything that is faced can be changed.
But nothing can be changed until it is faced.***

JAMES BALDWIN

MY PEPPERCORN TREE

In my childhood I saw a tree
That grew in my mind so constantly:
For I was city born and had never seen
Such a stately, evergreen!

By the farmhouse it stood: strong and just
Graceful guardian of wind and dust;
And through my window, I could see
Its languid limbs, beckoning me!

Beneath its lacy green fronds, I would play
As bowed branches held the worst at bay;
And crowned in pink clusters I would dream
That I was the most regal outback queen!

Lost in the veil of my fortress, my tower
Time flew so quickly by, my leafy bower;
and when with a child's sorrow, I bid goodbye
Leaves drooped in answer and gently sighed!

Once more in the city, I looked each day
At all the trees that grew along my way;
and tho' there were many Gum, Willow and Pine
I found no trace of the tree that was mine!

So with years of youth, long since gone
I returned to the plains where my heart belonged:
And there it was: weathered, worn, but waiting for me
My childhood companion: My Peppercorn tree!

© MAGGIE MAY GORDON

Sleep deficit link to youth mental illness

Young people that are sleeping less than five hours a night are three times more likely to develop mental ill health than those sleeping eight to nine hours according to a new study undertaken by the George Institute for Global Health. A survey of just under twenty thousand 17–24 year-olds across NSW, which ran for 18 months, revealed startling new evidence linking short sleep duration deprivation to mental ill health. Professor Nick Glozier, lead author of the study, said 'Sleep disturbance is a key symptom in mental disorders such as depression. There is also fairly consistent evidence that insufficient sleep also increases risk of cardiovascular illness, and can lead to weight gain in young people.'

The study can be found at: www.journalsleep.org



"Stop, breathe, and take a moment to acknowledge where you have been, where you are right now, and where you are going."

DEBRA SUMMER, COBARGO

For the past 10 years Debra Summer has lived in a little town of 400 people down the far south coast called Cobargo with her husband David, son AJ and daughter Ruby. She says moving to Cobargo was a lifestyle change and a fresh start on many levels.

At 35 our gorgeous little miracle Ruby had come into our lives and I truly began to question what was meaningful in my life. I had been told I had a one in a million chance of ever conceiving naturally again, had given up on IVF, journeyed through a marriage break-up, and met my soul mate David when I least expected. Oh, and I was doing a Masters of Applied Science Social Ecology.

Moving here was the best decision we ever made! Being actively involved in the community has been extremely rewarding (and tiring at times)—there are so many amazing opportunities! I am involved in The Crossing Land Education Trust—an environmental education camp modelling young people and sustainability in action in Bermagui, 'The Pathways Foundation'—a national harm prevention charity assisting young people make

the fundamental emotional shift from being a child to becoming a young adult, the Cobargo School of Arts Hall Committee, the homeschool community and now volunteer every week at Ruby's Steiner school at Mumbulla.

As well as my community work I have immersed myself in my celebrancy work. I am passionate about creating meaningful ceremonies for all transitions in life and so it is important for me to get to know the people I work with so I can craft each ceremony to reflect their unique story.

Holding a ceremony to mark the transition from one stage of life to another allows us to stop, breathe, and take that moment to acknowledge where we have been, where we are right now, and where we are going. This strengthens and deepens our understanding of and relationship with ourselves, our world, and those around us.

I especially love weddings, and feel privileged to be a part of this important rite of passage. The norm in our society is to get caught up in the 'dressing' of the event rather than the intimate process of preparing to step into the next chapter of your journey as husband and wife. The time

leading up to your wedding is precious and can be just as powerful as the ceremonial day if you step through it consciously together. I encourage couples to think about why they are having this sacred ceremony, to envisage where they are going, and to immerse themselves in the journey.

I believe as a society that we haven't been given many tools to deal with death in a healthy and meaningful way. Mostly families are still in shock when they quickly start arranging a funeral—they haven't even begun to process their thoughts and feelings and to truly grieve. I urge people to slow down, to take time to gather their thoughts, memories and emotions, and to seek whatever support they need to move through this rite of passage in a conscious, open and meaningful

way. My next community project will be to find a way to fund the purchase of a 'cool blanket' to use in our community when people want to have their loved ones at home for a few days after they have passed, while they begin their grieving process.

Menarche ceremonies are a time to celebrate and honour young women as they step into womanhood when they have their first period. We can make this a positive experience by guiding and supporting them. If they understand and embrace their natural rhythms and cycles, trust in their intuition and celebrate who they are, they will be powerful women indeed! I have built strong connections with several young women in our community through this process and it's such a delight to watch them blossom and grow.

Alfred Tennyson once said, *"I am a part of all that I have met"*. I carry a small part of everyone I connect with in my heart—they help create who I am and also enrich the lives of my family.

Ruby is growing and thriving in this rich and connected community. AJ has grown into a beautiful young man and is finding his way in Sydney—he now appreciates having a home in the country to visit, relax and refresh. David continues to amaze and inspire me. I am loving my work—a continual unfolding of growth, learning, gratitude and deep connection with people from across the globe.

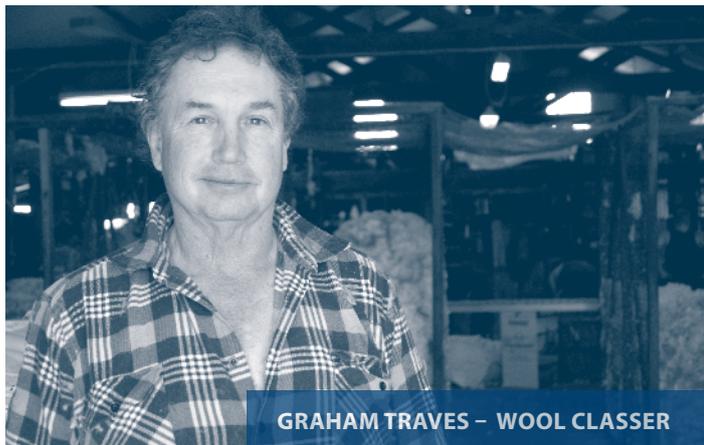
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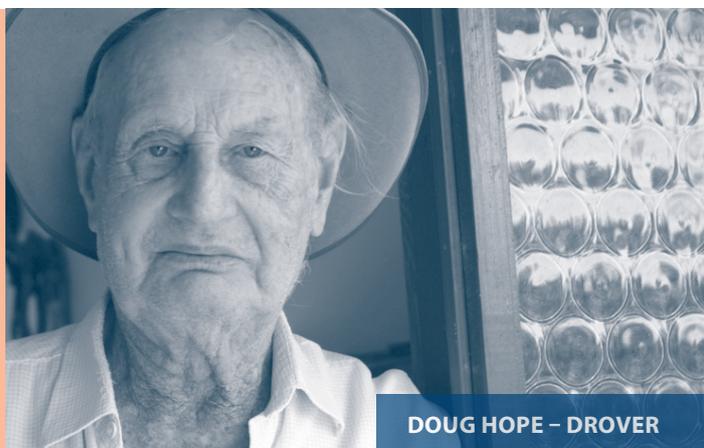
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stories from behind the farm gate



GRAHAM TRAVES – WOOL CLASSER

A shearing shed in full swing is a fascinating scene to observe; the pace is fast, the stakes high and there's a constant, concentrated thrum of activity. And presiding over it all is the wool classer. He or she stands at the sorting table, receiving each fleece as it comes still warm, from the sheep, then sorts, classifies and grades it to be sold at the best possible market price.

One Farm Day recently visited a wool shed near Cargo in NSW. We were there to meet wool classer Graham Traves and found him, like the rest of the crew, sitting down and enjoying the last few minutes of



DOUG HOPE – DROVER

Doug Hope is a man of many stories. He began droving around the NSW Western Districts in 1946 and has farmed the area for almost 50 years. He has driven stock through droughts (both rabbit and weather-induced), floods and endless 40 degree days, and can recount every trip and every season.

These days Doug lives in a cottage in the centre of Condobolin. The whole town seems to know and love him, and when One Farm Day visited he rose to greet us wearing perfectly polished riding boots, a work shirt, jeans and battered hat. A stock whip was hanging by the door and books of clippings, stories and collected letters were set by the easy chair, waiting to be displayed as each story unfolded.

Doug has worked through conditions most of us couldn't imagine; yet he says he'd do it all again and speaks of those days with the greatest

'smoko'. It was a warm Spring afternoon and the sheep were waiting patiently outside under a cluster of peppercorn trees. The scene was quiet and calm, but once 3.30 pm ticked over, the entire crew rose on cue and returned to their stations. Like clockwork.

Graham has been a wool classer for just over 40 years. He lives in Canowindra and during the shearing season (July–November), works across the region's major sheds. So it's fair to say that this is a man that knows and loves his wool. 'I get a kick out of seeing what the market will do next,' Graham says, 'what style of wool it's asking for and then working with the brokers and graziers to deliver just that'.

As long as the shears are going, Graham stands at the table, totally absorbed in his work. As fleece after fleece is thrown at him, Graham measures and then assesses it for quality before indicating to the shed-hand, which pack it should be pressed into. Throughout this process, the grazier or property owner hovers at his side. 'This is their livelihood,' Graham says, 'these blokes wait and invest over 12 months for the wool to come off so I understand they're anxious to see how the clip shapes up.'

Most of Graham's work is repeat business and he also works closely with a number of wool brokers. 'I never get any pressure from the graziers when classing their wool,' he says, 'but the brokers might sometimes suggest I concentrate on a specific area or trend which is helpful, it's good to know where the market is going.'

Graham has decades of experience in the wool game and is keen to share his experience with newcomers, 'in a good shed you'll all work together and everyone knows what to do. Generally a crew like this

of affection. Perhaps Banjo Paterson was right when he wrote, *'the drovers life has pleasures that the townfolk never know'*.

Doug's first droving job was in the summer of 1946 when he joined a small crew charged with bringing 2500 ewes from Goodooga near the Queensland border to a property in the Hillston area. In those days paddocks were measured in square miles and drovers could be on the road for up to five months at a time. Often the only fresh food they'd enjoy would be meat butchered as they travelled and occasional refreshments offered by generous station wives as they passed.

'It wasn't easy getting started back then,' Doug says, 'in the late 40s Condobolin had up to 15 drovers and I was still getting my 'plant' together'. But it took just one big gig to establish a name and then he was off. Literally. That was in 1948, 'I took 2500 woolly wethers from Bourke to Kimaculla that February, it was a hot and tough job that one. Some days we'd go up to 25 km between water sources'.

Doug delivered the stock on time and in good condition, and after that was approached with steady job offers. Soon enough he had more than he could handle — this was around the time of the terrible rabbit drought that struck after WWII.

During the late 40s and early 50s the Western District of NSW suffered from a unique set of circumstances; a run of boom seasons meant lots of feed growth but in the wake of WWII there was a lack of labour to run the farms and shortage of wire netting. All of this combined to create a rabbit plague that ate out the entire region leaving

is great at helping learners, we all get in there, encourage them and give suggestions'. 'But on the flip side, it only takes one bad worker to upset the whole lot, so you have to control that, just as with any other workplace.'

While the Central Tablelands isn't traditionally considered a world class producer of fine merino wool, Graham is the region's biggest advocate. 'When I was first getting into the wool game, I was told that Canowindra and the surrounding area was too good for merino sheep, that it was more suited to prime fat lambs and Tasmania and Goulburn were the go, but when you get out and start looking around, it's pretty clear that this area is as much suited to wool as it is to growing lambs.'

To prove his point, Graham points to the fleece that's just been thrown like a parachute, across his sorting table, 'this wool will probably end up in a high quality wool suit,' he says, 'most of the wool I am seeing here today is very fine, around 17-18 micron. It's lovely wool,' he confirms with a nod.

In addition to his wool classing work, Graham is also heavily involved with the family's Poll Dorset stud, and shares the workload with his three brothers. 'I'm the stud and farm manager and my brothers help part-time.'

So how did a farm boy turn into a wool classer? 'I was always taken with the wool industry,' Graham says, 'so shortly after finishing school, I took my wool classing certificate, and learnt the rest on the job.'

Beginning his classing career just before the wool boom of the 70s when Australia had a record 170 million sheep, Graham has

seen the highs and lows of an industry that once carried Australia's economy. He recalls the spectacular collapse of the reserve price scheme in 1991, an event that left such a large stockpile of wool that it took almost a decade to sell off. This in itself encouraged many graziers to switch to lamb production and merino numbers dropped dramatically.

But even though the reserve collapse meant tough times for the entire wool industry, Graham was no fan of that system; 'with the reserve, there was no incentive for growers to be innovative, they started growing for weight rather than quality and we saw a lots of average wools coming through the market. Since we lost the reserve scheme, price is now more reflective of quality so graziers are driven to innovate and grow better wool'.

Over the past decade, Graham says, 'I've seen very fast uptake of available scientific advances. Farmers now take samples from each sheep so they can track what micron they produce. They are getting smart about how they breed their sheep and what they feed them all in order to produce exactly the kind of wool the market wants. And as a result, we are now seeing much broader, well-styled wools that are much finer than they look.'

It seems that Graham thrives among the buzz of a hard working shearing shed and he certainly recommends the career to anyone interested in pursuing agriculture from a different angle, 'if you can, start your wool classing studies while still at school, then go to TAFE, get some experience as a shed hand and most importantly, do your research and follow the market trends.'

barely a blade of grass behind. It wasn't until the early 50s that the situation eased off and this was thanks to the introduction of the virus myxomatosis by Australia's Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

During the rabbit plague, Doug and his crew moved stock all over NSW and into Queensland in search of grass. Many farmers had their animals out on the state's network of Travelling Stock Routes' (TSRs) for months at a time and Doug recalls a big job in 1952 which had him, his crew and a mob of sheep on the road for over 18 weeks. These big jobs were made more challenging by floods which, Doug recalls, 'at times turned the whole region into one big bog'.

'Those TSRs could be a real bun fight in those years,' he said, 'you'd have to always have somebody keeping an eye on who was ahead so the mobs didn't get mixed up'.

They were long days in the saddle, and not always through structured TSR routes. Many weeks were spent droving through open unfenced country and in these cases, drovers were required to give notice of their approach 12 hours in advance, giving farmers enough time to move their own stock out of the way. Some farmers phoned ahead to the next property but otherwise it was a long ride to give notice. In general they would stick to the state recommendations that drovers travel their cattle 10 miles a day and sheep 6 miles a day, but as Doug says, it always depended on feed, water and the condition of the stock.

When travelling with sheep, Doug explains, you were allowed one "killer" per week. Fresh meat was kept in a calico bag for a day or two and the rest was thrown into a sack of coarse salt to preserve. There were no cool bags or eskies and as Doug says, 'boy you'd need a lot of water after eating that meat'. When droving with cattle, they might catch a wild pig or goat and would often buy a sheep from property owners when passing through.

At night the crew would string up a tarp and listen to the radio. If a trough, tank or dam was nearby they'd jump in for a wash and then settle down for a supper of salted mutton, pig, goat or meat with potatoes and tinned vegetables, finished off with a cup of tea, damper and honey or jam.

These might have been the scenes Banjo Paterson dreamt of when he wrote those famous lines about his droving character Clancy, '*And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended, and at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.*'

Doug's team was pretty lean but effective; he rode with an offsider and a cook, up to 10 dogs and 3-4 horses per person. The horses were all hobbled at night with bells around their necks to ensure they could be found in the morning. And the stock themselves were generally left unfenced all night (unless yards could be found), guarded by the dogs and clumped together by their natural herding instinct.

continued page 22 ...

Why schmoozing with your gal pals is important

During a Stanford lecture on the mind-body connection and the relationship between stress and disease the speaker said that one of the best things a man could do for his health is to be married to a woman whereas for a woman, one of the best things she could do for her health was to nurture her relationships with her girlfriends.

Women connect with each other differently and provide support systems that help each other to deal with stress and difficult life experiences. Physically this quality 'girlfriend time' helps to create more serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps combat depression and can create a general feeling of wellbeing. Women share feelings whereas men often form relationships around activities. They rarely sit down with a buddy and talk about how they feel. Women do it all of the time, and evidently that is very good for our health.

He said that spending time with a friend is as important to our general health as jogging or working out at the gym. There's a tendency to think that when we're exercising we're doing something good for our bodies, but when we are hanging out with friends we are wasting our time and should be more productively engaged—not true. In fact, he said that failure to create and maintain quality personal relationships is as dangerous to our physical health as smoking!

So every time you hang out to schmooze with a gal pal, congratulate yourself for doing something good for your health!



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... Doug Hope story continued from page 21

Like most good drovers, Doug had no time for alcohol while they were out moving stock. 'You need to have your wits with you when droving. I've heard of fellas having a few drinks at night then waking up to find the whole mob gone!'

It was a different story as soon as the stock was handed over though. And while Doug has never been much of a drinker, the crew would often make up for his moderate ways.

'I remember camping near a pub one night after we'd handed over a mob. The boys had been at the pub for a few hours drinking then came back to camp — as drunk as owls — grabbed one of our "killer" sheep and threw it over the bar to pay for the night's grog. Boy it made a mess of them that night!'

Doug's fulltime droving days came to an end after marrying on August 5th, 1954. His wife was a city girl and they settled at Redloun, a property about 60 miles from Condobolin. Here they welcomed their two children, Sue and Colin and with them, worked through floods, droughts and all the other highs and lows that come with living on a farm. Doug remembers the flood year of 1956, 'It was so boggy that year, we had to muster for shearing with a borrowed pushbike!'

While he still did the odd droving job, Doug's focus now shifted to life on the farm and his family. Daughter Sue followed him in the saddle so to speak, and grew up to become an accomplished camp drafter. Photos of her helping to muster sheep on what looks to be an adults' horse at the age of three are testament to her early start as a rider.

Professional drovers are hard to find these days, 'stock just aren't moved that way anymore, and if farmers need to take their stock out on the long paddock in search of grass, they'll generally do it themselves!'

What does this mean for the network of travelling stock routes around NSW and into Queensland? They have become recognised not only as a source of emergency feed but also for their role as corridors of refuge for natural vegetation, threatened species and native woodlands. Because many follow traditional Aboriginal travel lines, they also still provide important connections on that front too. The entire network is currently under consideration for National Heritage Listing.

Speaking with Doug, you get the impression he'd give anything to get back in the saddle and ride along those stock routes again but for now he's happy to keep telling stories and there are plenty of people waiting to hear them.



2012 NSW Farmers of the Year

Peter and Alison Campbell farm a 1550 ha mixed cropping sheep enterprise at "Avondale" 17 km west of Henty.

The Campbells rotate their wheat/canola cropping program with lucerne/clover/socksfoot pastures.

At any one time cropping accounts for about 70 per cent of the farm area, and a merino self-replacing flock of 2500 ewes and 1000 wethers is run on the pastures.

The farm is managed with a view to maximising profit while maintaining the sustainability of the natural resource base.

In the last three years canola has become the most important crop because of its profitability, but several steps have been taken to reduce the inherent risk associated with growing canola, including: using hybrid varieties; focusing on moisture

storage prior to sowing; using aerial seeding clovers as a green manure crop; using price risk management tools; and keeping other enterprises in the mix to balance income.

The livestock enterprise is a self-replacing merino flock with 30 per cent of ewes joined to terminal sires. The sheep are grazed rotationally on the pastures over summer and autumn and set stocked for lambing in August. Wheat stubbles are grazed but not canola stubbles, and when groundcover limits are reached the sheep are put into feedlots.

Maintaining groundcover and soil fertility and stability are important factors in the Campbells' agronomic management. Over time they have moved from direct drilling to zero till—and are currently sowing with a disc seeder.

Peter and Alison developed a whole farm plan 20 years ago and it has been implemented over that time.

Water flow is controlled over the whole farm with the use of contour banks running into grassed up waterways and then into dams. The waterways are fenced off, not grazed and act as a filter for nutrient runoff.

Windbreaks and shelter belts have been placed strategically around the farm, laneways for sheep movement have been constructed, and reserves have been set aside and improved with the addition of understory for wildlife protection.

In addition, with the help of a Landcare grant, a disused railway bisecting the property has been fenced off and trees planted. This has resulted in a marked increase in small bird numbers such as robins and finches.

Risk management is an important part of the enterprise with strategies in place to reduce the impact of drought, disease natural disasters and market downturns.

For drought preparedness, the Campbells conserve moisture by summer spraying of weeds, retaining full stubble, storing grain and hay for stock, and carrying two age groups of wethers to off-load quickly if necessary.

To manage against disease they regularly monitor crops and flock health and treat where necessary.

Price risk management and enterprise diversification are important strategies for coping with market downturns.

Peter and Alison have been involved in their industry and community in a number of very worthwhile roles.

Peter was on the NSW Farmers Council (1991–94), chair and member southern region Grains Research & Development Corporation advisory group, on the Lockhart Shire Council (1995–2008) including as Deputy Mayor, heavily involved with Landcare, founding chairman Eastern Riverina Merino Breeders Association, and is currently Director of Henty Community Club, and Henty Rotary Club, since 1983.

Alison is a past Chair of Henty School P&C, past secretary Billabong P&C, current chair catering committee of Henty Field Days, and Director and Secretary of Henty Bendigo Community Bank.

For more information about the Farmer of the Year Award see: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/events/foty/2012



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Stop and assess the view from your verandah: A non-profit perspective

In this environment, managing and leading a non-profit is becoming more and more of a challenge, and let's talk about the white elephant in the room ... the ongoing challenge we face attracting outside funding!

Whilst many of you may be familiar with identifying and applying for funding, are you really giving justice to all the time and heartache you spend on these submissions?

There are so many angles and ways to approach a submission and each is customised depending on funder priorities. It's amazing how much of a story just their questions alone tell us if we really sit and analyse them ... something those who are more experienced will do.

However there are a few commonalities that any writer, beginner or advanced, need to include in tenders, award submissions, grants and sponsorship applications. By focusing our energies on addressing these we will be way ahead of our competitors—well, at least the ones that haven't attended one of my workshops or aren't reading this article! So if you apply this information you are more likely to be successful—as have hundreds of people I have trained across Australia.

The commonalities are what I call the Four Abilities™—Accountability, Capability, Viability and Sustainability. This is a model I've been developing for some years. It covers the four key areas that

all sponsors and funders are looking for in submissions.

So, how does that translate to your submissions? Here are a few questions to ask as you sit down to write.

1. Accountability

You will need to demonstrate that you have governance processes in place. Most funders want to ensure that you comply with statutory requirements such as conflicts of interest and confidentiality. Do you have a code of conduct or a confidentiality agreement? Do you have a register of interests you maintain? Do you have policies and procedures that are used and updated? What are your risk identification and management practices like? What about an audit? What are the accountability systems you have in place to govern the project and your organisation?

2. Viability

Are you a viable organisation? Do you have a track record for

delivering similar programs? Do you have any 'skeletons in the closet' like funding projects that have previously gone awry? Do you have enough cash at bank to cover liabilities—are you solvent? Is the program you are proposing really going to work in your community? Just because it worked in another community well, doesn't mean it will work well in yours. Is the project right for the target users, have you forgotten or missed any user groups that would benefit?

3. Capability

Who is leading the project? Do they have the skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver? If you are going to use volunteers, will they be available to help you out with all those tasks and maybe extra hours ... really? What experience exists on your project committee or board, do you have a project manager? Why should your organisation receive funding over another organisation—what makes you better? Do you have better relationships with the target

group(s) and evidence of this with examples?

4. Sustainability

How will the project continue beyond the funding you are receiving? How will the outcomes and outputs you have identified continue beyond the funding? Will this project really benefit your organisation, is it going to help you become more sustainable? If not, it may sound like a "cash-grab" so why are you doing it?

By addressing these points in the relevant questions throughout your application you will demonstrate that your organisation and the project is a low risk and that you are the best organisation to partner with the funding body to achieve their/ your goals.

For more information on the Four Abilities; Governance; funding and other non-profit issues including free courses and assistance:

www.nataliebramble.com.au

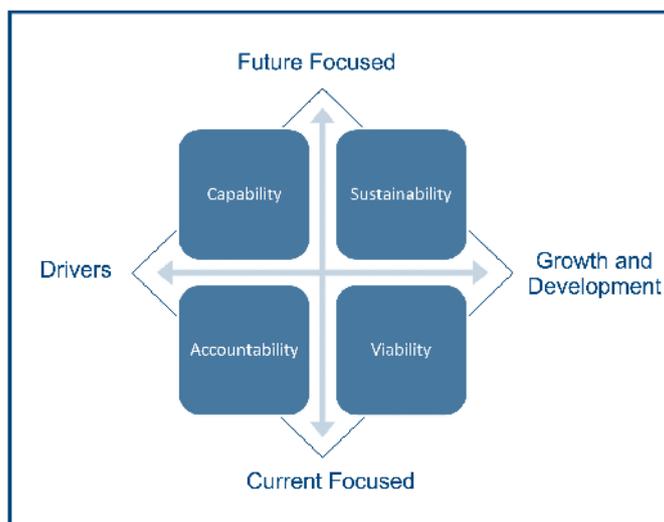
We also recommend Easy Grants newsletter for news on funding opportunities and grants:

www.ourcommunity.com.au

**Natalie is a Business/NFP Consultant, NFP Governance Specialist and Coach, Engaging Trainer and Facilitator. With over 15 years in the non-profit funding world as an assessor on grant, award and tender panels Natalie also writes, trains and mentors others and personally holds a 92% success rate.*

ADVERTISEMENT

Four Abilities™ Framework



(C) Natalie Bramble 2010



Jennifer Miller with Jo Newton and Zonta Club of Armidale President Karen Tromp.

2012 Hidden treasures unveiled

The 2012 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll was launched in October last year by Troy Grant MP, Parliamentary Secretary and member for Dubbo, at the NSW Rural Women's Gathering held at Parkes.

The 2012 Honour Roll includes 126 inspiring women nominated from a range of services such as Red Cross, the Cancer Council, Hospital Auxiliaries, Bush Fire Brigades, Meals on Wheels and Rescue Services. Their stories reveal just some of the ways volunteers are ensuring rural communities remain vibrant, enjoyable and sustainable places to live.

Local Armidale resident and UNE student Jo Newton was nominated by the Zonta Club of Armidale Inc for her active participation and leadership on the Young Farmers' Council, with the Armidale Branch, and with the Farming Futures Project.

Jo said, 'I feel very humbled and honoured to be recognised in the 2012 Honour Roll. Since I moved to Armidale in 2008 I have been involved in a range of community focused groups and committees. I find my involvement very rewarding and have had the pleasure of getting to know a wide range of people also passionate about making positive changes in their community.'

Another New England resident Shalini Pratap was nominated by Tamworth Regional Council for her dedication to promoting and assisting the advancement of social inclusion and unity.

Shalini, a third generation Fijian Indian, and her husband moved to Australia 13 years ago. Faced with uncertainty regarding their

permanent residency in 2003 the family moved to Tamworth. Their settlement story is full of challenges, frustrations, uncertainty and at times distress.

Shalini knows what it is like to relocate to a new country, experience social isolation and displacement and as such she has a very strong desire to help others in a similar position.

Her volunteer work as a multicultural leader has seen Shalini initiate and coordinate local Indian events such as the Diwali Festival (annual Indian Lights Festival) and Bollywood nights. She also assists in the organisation of other cultural activities within the region.

Shalini said she is, 'honoured and greatly surprised to be recognised as a hidden treasure by my community. What I do is from my heart and it gives me great personal satisfaction. To be recognised for this work is very rewarding'.

Tamworth Regional Council Cultural Diversity Officer Tanya Hague said, 'Shalini's passion for her Indian heritage is obvious and so is the great love and appreciation she has for the country she now calls home'.

The annual Hidden Treasures Honour Roll which began in 2010 is an initiative of NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Rural Women's Network and is supported by Women NSW and the NSW Centre for Volunteering.

NSW DPI Community Engagement Manager Sonia Muir said, 'the initiative provides an opportunity to formally recognise the valuable role of volunteers in our communities and to say thank you to the more than 5 million people who contribute more than 700 million hours of community service across Australia'.

The 2013 Honour Roll will be launched at the NSW Rural Women's Gathering to be hosted by the Upper Hunter from 25–27 October. We invite you to nominate a friend, family member, colleague, community worker—any rural woman who you believe makes your community a better place to live. Nominations open 1 May and close 16 August 2013.

2013 Honour Roll nominations

Nominate a rural woman for the 2013 Honour Roll at:
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn/activities/hidden-treasures
Alternatively, contact the Rural Women's Network on 02 6391 3620 or email: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au for more information and/or the Nomination Form.

ABC Open: What's your story?

ABC Open is all about stories, and there are great ones around every corner—you just have to keep your ears and eyes open! A fantastic initiative, ABC Open is a great way for regional communities to connect and share stories. If you live in regional Australia you're invited to share your stories through photos, words, sounds and video. ABC Open producers are based in regional towns around Australia to help you get started. Contributions so far = 32495 so there's sure to be a story that will appeal to everyone's interests. <https://open.abc.net.au>

Cowra Community chest

By Kaye Chapman, Cowra

Helping older people live independently



Older people are generally happier, healthier and more connected to their communities when they continue to live in their own homes. Most want to delay entry to a retirement village or nursing home for as long as possible.

The Whiddon Group's Community Care services are designed to assist elderly people to live competently and safely in their own homes. Services are located in Narrabri, South West Sydney, Newcastle, Far North Coast, Bathurst and Mid North Coast areas. They offer Commonwealth funded services incorporating Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) packages.

The services offered are designed to improve the overall health, wellbeing and independence of clients and are tailored to their specific needs. Types of services include: Assistance with personal care including bathing, toileting and dressing; housekeeping and meal preparation; nursing care including wound care, assistance with medications and continence management; transport; respite care; and social support including outings and shopping assistance.

For more information about The Whiddon Group and the funded services provided call 1300 738 388 or see: www.thewhiddongroup.com.au

Kaye Chapman facilitated the establishment of Cowra Community Chest Inc—a fantastic initiative to support families with high cost medical expenses. The Chest won the Cowra Community Group of the Year Award in 2009 and The Chest's Contact Person won the Cowra Citizen of the Year Award in 2012 for dedication to his role and compassion to those in need.

A Registered Charity, Cowra Community Chest Inc. was formed in October 2003 following a public meeting of interested residents. We met to form an organisation to assist residents of the Shire who were having financial difficulties due to high cost medical problems. The Chest has a Management and Fundraising Committee and an Assessment Panel made up of community members from all walks of life. The Chest was launched in November 2003 with an appeal for a small boy who had lost part of his hand in an accident.

Residents of the Cowra Shire who have a medical condition can apply for assistance by contacting a Duty Person to arrange a confidential interview. A submission is then prepared for consideration by the Assessment Panel who remain anonymous to the community and the applicant. The identity of the applicant is also kept anonymous with case numbers used to identify them. Each case is judged on merit and the applicant is notified of the result usually within several days of applying.

The Chest aims to assist people and families where Federal or State government funded programs and organisations are not able to provide assistance. The Chest funds help cover gaps in accommodation, travel, specialist fees, pharmacy accounts, chemotherapy accounts, household utility accounts accrued since diagnosis, medical aids or equipment to assist the applicant regain their normal life. Over 100 people have been assisted since 2003.

The Chest is funded by volunteers who help raise money and generous sponsors who donate to The Chest. Our administration costs are covered by conducting stalls or sausage sizzles at various festivals, shows and

markets as well as street stalls and raffles held throughout the year. We have a great band of volunteers who are always ready to help out and we have had equipment such as trailers and BBQ's donated to assist our fundraising. Surplus funds are transferred to be used for clients. We receive financial support from local businesses, groups and individuals who generously donate money and continue to do so regularly. The money donated is used exclusively to assist clients.

Although The Chest operates as an anonymous organisation, with the permission of a client it can conduct public appeals for people with larger needs. In September 2011 a public appeal was held to raise funds to purchase a modified wheelchair accessible vehicle for Malakye, a 7-year-old boy with severe Cerebral Palsy. Malakye's Grandmother was raising him and two other children under eight years. She'd had both breasts removed due to cancer and was unable to lift Malakye in and out of her small vehicle. Travelling to medical appointments was difficult as she had to rely on others for transportation. The Chest raised the \$62 000 needed for the vehicle, and with some help from an organisation in Sydney who funded the conversion costs we were able to present the vehicle to Malakye and his family for Christmas. While the vehicle remains the property of The Chest it is for the family's exclusive use.

This year The Chest will run a 'Campaign for Cancer' to raise funds specifically for cancer patients in need of assistance. 70 percent of our clients have cancer related problems so we're hoping many of our clubs and organisations will come on board and assist.

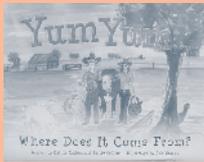
We believe many towns have people who are struggling to find funds to meet daily living expenses following extended periods of medical treatment. One such community is Cooma, who after consultation and meetings with representatives of The Cowra Chest have undertaken to form a similar organisation with the same ideals within their community.

If you're interested in starting a Community Chest contact Kaye on 02 6341 3549.

YUM YUM ... WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Written by Cathie & Emily Colless.
Illustrated by Deb Murray

A book for early childhood highlighting where food and fibre comes from and the significance of our farmers. It can be enjoyed by city and country kids alike—for city kids it will be a great educational experience, and for the country kids it will build on their existing knowledge. Deb's pictures are fun and eye catching yet still retain the authenticity of farm life—a real treat for children and parents alike.



Cost \$20. Email: emilycolless@bigpond.com or see: www.yumyum4kids.com.au to order your copy.

TWO FARMS

By Bett Taylor

An authentic look into the relationships, values, attitudes and livelihoods of Australian farmers and how their lives are inexorably tied with their lands and farms. A timeless story that will charm readers of all ages and shows them the importance of family and community, and the simple pleasures and dramas of life in the bush.

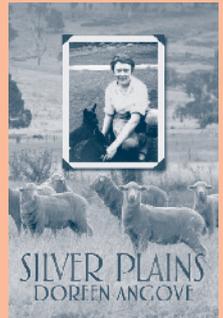


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SILVER PLAINS

By Doreen Angove

It's 1930 and Australia is in the grip of the Great Depression. Norah Templeton arrives to work as a governess for six children on the property, Silver Plains. Through her eyes we come to know the station boss, his wife and children, the jackeroos, the cooks, maids and gardeners. Norah is swept up in a blossoming romance with Harry, the handsome stockman. She discovers that life in the bush is not all roses and romance.



Published by Ace Press | RRP \$22.95
ISBN 9780987174314 | To order contact Doreen on 02 6959 2029 or order online www.acepress.com.au

Menindee Cultural Gardens

By Kim Long, Buronga



A sense of community spirit and pride in the achievement of creating the Menindee Cultural Gardens was the call of the day at the official opening on December 5. The official flag raising ceremony was led by Evelyn Bates, Traditional Custodian, with special guest, David Shillington, Captain of the Canberra Raiders.

The culmination of hard work, perseverance and hundreds of volunteer hours was on display, and it was evident to all attendees that there was great pride in their community and their new garden.

The gardens are located on the site of the Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council and incorporate native plants that have traditional uses—both medicinal and bush tucker. Some of the plants are prickly wattle, the seeds of

which are used to make bread, Emu bush, traditionally used as a medicinal plant, and milk thistle, known as 'panyuwanpa, pulapul or parlampa' in Barkindji language, and is eaten raw as greens, and also as a medicine for the blood.

In addition to the plants, the garden includes bower sheds, shade houses, humpies, spirit poles, a fire pit and bench seating, creating the perfect atmosphere for locals to come, sit and enjoy the surrounds, talking and learning about traditional culture.

Project partners included the former Lower Murray Darling CMA, Native Blende Nursery, Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council and many volunteers from the Menindee Community who dedicated their efforts and hard work to plan, fund and complete the gardens. The gardens will aid in the economic security and development of Menindee, by empowering the community to utilise the gardens for seed harvesting, plant propagation and, in the future, a plant nursery. The community has embraced the Gardens and taken ownership in caring for the garden. It has also led to the formation of the Menindee Aboriginal Landcare group.

'The Menindee Cultural Garden provides a hands-on experience, where people can learn about the plants that have been essential for Barkindji people's survival in this area for tens of thousands of years,' said Catchment Officer

Ronni O'Donnell. 'This is an outstanding community educational resource. We can teach our young people about the cultural knowledge and the plants that have sustained their people. It's important to keep our culture strong and to pass that information on to people both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal,' she said.

Special guest David Shillington, Captain of the Canberra Raiders, was in awe of the enthusiasm, dedication and tenacity of the volunteers in developing and creating the garden. 'This is a great bonding experience and brings together the community. It's important that the traditional knowledge from elders is passed on and to carry on traditional knowledge and customs, so the next generation has the knowledge to pass on to their children'. David happily spent time with the locals, signing autographs, chatting with attendees, tossing a ball and participating in a hands-on erosion and water quality demonstrations with local school children, organised and facilitated by Regional Landcare Facilitator, Kim Trigg.

Local resident, Margot Muscat of the Menindee Rural Transaction Centre said, 'This is an amazing benefit to our community, especially to the Land Council and Aboriginal community. It gives us a place to meet and greet as well as to just wander through the garden and get back to nature!'



When trying to have a baby, information about when to start, how to start, how long to persist until seeking specialist advice, and what treatment techniques and options are proven to be most successful, can all enhance a woman's chance of having a baby. Unfortunately, unlike their city counterparts rural women don't always have ready access to experts that can provide the information they need.

Recent statistics indicate that fertility issues impact approximately 1 in 6 Australian couples, this equates to over 3 million Australians. With a third of the population living in the rural sector, infertility is a significant rural health issue.

People living in rural areas are challenged by: less access to GP's (particularly those with expertise in fertility treatments/advice); less access to Fertility Specialists; and facing inherent delays in fertility treatment and investigations due to distance and availability of resources.

Living in a rural area often incurs increased expenses associated with travel and accommodation when seeking specialist medical treatment and advice.

All of these challenges impact on rural women's ability to access timely specialist advice and treatment and, as a result, diminish their chances of achieving a pregnancy.

Getting pregnant has a lot to do with timing! And not just in the way you may think! Time can be the enemy for women over the age of 30 wanting to have a

baby, and for those dealing with fertility issues. The fact is that a woman's fertility (the chances of her having a baby) diminishes with age.

The decline of a woman's fertility starts off slowly; after 35 it declines at a rate of 3–5 per cent each year and by 40 it is in rapid decline. This means that the older you get the harder it is to have a baby, whether you're using fertility treatments or not. It also means that the longer you try without success, the harder it can be if you need to start treatment.

Time wasted due to delays in seeking advice, assistance, appropriate investigation and treatment can diminish the chances of success of achieving a pregnancy and result in unnecessary costs both emotionally and financially.

I recently spoke to a woman from a rural area who shared her story with me: She had met her husband at 34 (he was 40) and they married soon after. They were eager to start a family so began trying straight away. After two years of trying without

success they spoke to their doctor who prescribed them a fertility drug. They persisted with their attempts, using the fertility drug for another 18 months without success. It was then that they decided to travel and see a Fertility Specialist. After a series of investigations, over six months, it was established that the problem they faced was due to blocked fallopian tubes.

This couple had spent four years trying to have a baby when they actually had little or no chance of achieving a pregnancy. At the time I spoke to them they were about to start their third round of IVF in an attempt to have the baby they wanted. What they said was that they wished they had known more about their own fertility, what contributes to infertility and what to do about it. They wished they'd had someone to tell them that age is one of the key factors that impacts fertility, and given their age, early investigation and treatment would have been recommended. If they'd had that information, they would have sought assistance earlier, saved valuable time and possibly avoided costs of repeated IVF.

There are many stories just like this one, most of which result from the fact that those living in rural areas simply don't have ready access to expert information that could make a difference.

Now rural women and couples can access an affordable online healthcare initiative that brings the expert information to them. The **Sonoa Fertility Report** is the latest method of delivering high quality, personalised healthcare information on line.

continued page 32 ...

GRANTS & FUNDING

PUGGY HUNTER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

Scholarships up to \$15 000 a year for fulltime study are available to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander's students who are: studying or wanting to study an undergraduate course in a health related field at TAFE or University and who need financial assistance for study costs. Opens July 2013 for study in 2014.

Ph: 1800 688 628

scholarships@rcna.org.au
www.rcna.org.au



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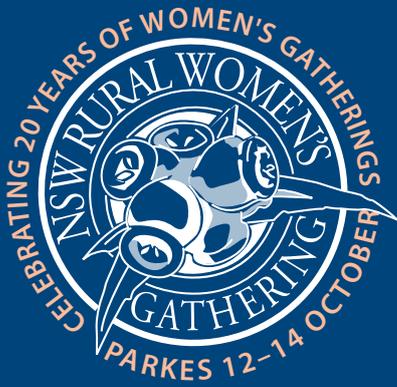
Your one-stop-shop for government grants and funding information listing up to 300 programs ranging from grants to support sport or community infrastructure to funding to assist youth organisations and people experiencing hardship.

www.grantslink.gov.au

Enter to win!

Free book give away

To win a copy of the featured books on page 27 (*Yum, Yum; Two Farms or Silver Plains*), write and tell us in 25 words or less which book you would like and why. **Entries close 29 April.** Send your entry to: The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800. See page 2 for Terms & Conditions.



Parkes Gathering a sensational success!

A COMPILATION REPORT BY LYNN ROGERS (PARKES COMMITTEE) & SONIA MUIR (RWN)

The Friday night market was a great way to kick-start the 20th NSW Rural Women's Gathering in Parkes. The atmosphere was buzzing as women perused the market bazaars buying crafts, clothing, accessories, goat products, household items and gourmet foods.

The night's agenda included wonderful interpretive dances by young boys from the regionally based Googar troupe and a roving fashion parade to whet the retail lovers' appetites.

Saturday morning provided an opportunity to celebrate where it all began with a lively presentation by Tottenham resident Fran Rowe who was in Parkes in 1991 at the first NSW Rural Women's Conference—a prelude to rural women's gatherings. This inaugural event identified a range of needs and concerns for women living in rural, remote and regional NSW and saw the birth of the Rural Women's Network.

Fran was named the NSW Premier's 2012 Woman of the Year for supporting and empowering Australia's agricultural sector during tough times and environmental disasters. Premier O'Farrell said, 'Her voice has influenced agricultural policy, legislation and assistance measures for farmers.'

In 1984 Fran established a voluntary rural financial counselling service for struggling farming families. Being a farmer she knew the difficulties farming families were facing, especially with drought and skyrocketing interest rates.

Fran experienced first hand how the 1980s rural crisis pushed rural women to reach out for help and become more engaged.

Her service became the basis for an employed counsellor model which has evolved into 95 paid counsellors across Australia.

She told us to, 'persevere, speak up and get your message to those with the power to do something about the problems faced by rural Australia.'

'Persevere, speak up and get your message to those with the power to do something about the problems faced by rural Australia.' FRAN ROWE

Lana Mitchell proved to be a speaker with a passion for everything she does. Her childhood was spent amongst plants, gardens, agriculture and botany so a love of growing things was in her blood.

She pioneered a unique flannel flower breed called White Romance overcoming many hurdles—such as losing 2500 of her 3000 hydroponically grown plants. Not to be beaten, Lana approached a range of experts and restarted the business on her property at Gundaroo where she re-bloomed gaining momentum year by year.

In the earlier years Lana would load her ute and drive around Canberra peddling her flowers from florist to florist. It was during this time that she realised TAFE floristry qualifications did not include Australia's wild flowers, so in typical Lana

style she set out to work with curriculum writers and amend this anomaly.

Now her business, Back Creek Country, grows 7000 plants annually, yielding up to 30 000 stems which go to the Australian market, as well as overseas to the USA, Austria, Switzerland, Germany and Japan.

Lana is ready for her next phase and is leasing out her growing sheds to others so she can spend more time with her two children and expand her work with New Rural Industries Australia. She is truly an inspiring woman who can spot potential and turn it into a commercial reality.

Her take home message was to, 'never give up and use networking to find experts who will help you to overcome any difficulties you face!'

Troy Grant, Member for Dubbo performed the official opening—representing The Honourable Katrina Hodgkinson, Minister for Primary Industries. He acknowledged the strength of women in rural NSW and applauded their achievements.

Troy launched the *2012 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll*, announced the launch of RWN's new project—Rural Women Connect and the Department of Primary Industries' \$30 000 sponsorship for the 2013 gathering being hosted by women from Scone on 25–27 October.

Prize winners!

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the RWN Gathering Participant Data & Feedback Survey Form. Your comments and suggestions will help ensure the success of future Gatherings. Everyone who completed the survey was given the chance to win 1 of 4 special prize packs containing a selection of books. Congratulations to the following lucky winners: **Nina Crawford**, Forbes; **Sally Green**, Mandurama; **Heather McCarthy**, Dubbo; and **Chris Redman**, Gloucester.

Saturday afternoon we were treated to a range of women's stories and here are a few 'gems' to share:

Anna Unger: Dedication is the key. Believe in those who are your supporters. (Anna stayed at Peak Hill Central School for her senior years as she valued her dedicated teachers. She now lectures at University and works as a clinical pharmacist at Armidale Base Hospital).

Danica Leys: Keep searching until you find your place in the world. Study a related area if the area of your choice is out of reach—it will come within your reach eventually! Combine what you have, to get what you want. Use technology—Facebook, Twitter etc to meet others who are interested in you and what you have to offer. Great learning experiences are awaiting you in social media. (Danica combined her legal

qualifications with her love of agriculture when she found that neither satisfied her on their own and has co-created the Twitter community AgChatOz.)

Corinne Annetts: Even in adversity, if your dream is worth pursuing, keep going! (Corinne moved her goat herd from Tasmania to Uralla but found that all she had learnt in Tasmania didn't suit her new environment. She came from a 'clean green' farm to an area with diseased soil. After losses in the herd and shedding many tears, Corinne learned to seek advice, test her soil and keep trying different ways until she succeeded. Her goats milk Sunhill products are available online.)

Stefanie Loader: Being a woman in a man's world is very possible. The mining industry is looking for more women. Look out for scholarships that will help you with the costs of

study or overseas tours. Talk to successful women who will give you guidance and enhance your confidence. (Stefanie is General Manager of North Parkes Mines.)

Jocellin Jansson: Take advantage of the grants and scholarships that are available. The Royal Agricultural Society Foundation (RASf) provides philanthropic investment into rural NSW focusing on enhancing education for rural students and the availability of future skills.

All these women held the audience in the palms of their hands. Over 380 women (and a few men) listened attentively to every word and applauded wholeheartedly after each address, such as the magnitude of the messages delivered.

With 54 workshops on offer the decision to choose just two was indeed very difficult for each of the delegates. On the menu was

digital photography, making jewellery, creating fascinators, researching family trees, painting on silk or on canvas, yoga, cheese making, restoring furniture and learning how to 'fluff' your homes ... to name but a few.

The Indian Cooking workshop was popular and Kaylani Vontimitta and her husband Prakash also talked about India and the traditions associated with each dish. These relative newcomers to Parkes, arriving just 10 months ago have proved to be a wonderful addition to the community.

As an alternative to workshops some participants chose to tour the town or the beautiful gardens while others travelled to the museum or famous Dish Telescope. Free time was also an opportunity for women to wander the shops that stayed open over the weekend to cater for the visitors.



Students from Parkes High School played a key role in the gathering by volunteering to escort women to workshops at the School. These young people were wonderful ambassadors reinforcing the image of Parkes as a friendly hospitable community.

The Viva Las Vegas Extravaganza Gala Dinner on Saturday night brought out a plethora of Priscillas and people donning their 'glad rags' or dress-ups and getting into dancing to the Elvis and Tom Jones numbers. Rural women certainly know how to let their hair down and have a good time.

Sunday morning participants were treated to a free breakfast hosted by Rotary along with a yoga and

Pilates session in the park and an open air Ecumenical service conducted by Liesel Walters.

Jessica Rowe provided a refreshing highlight on Sunday and remarked on what a delight it was to be in the country. She also revealed the glee of sleeping in until 6 am rather than dragging herself out of bed at 4.30 am to be on set for the weekend Morning Sunrise TV program. She believes that having conversations and sharing stories is so important for women and read snippets from her book: *Love, Wisdom & Motherhood*—a collection of conversations with 11 women who were exceptionally honest about the obstacles, myths,

heartaches, realities and joys they experienced as mothers. As Jessica says, 'children are a great leveller bringing us down to earth and back to what really matters in life.'

The grand finale on Sunday was the handover to the Scone women who will host the 2013

Gathering and a drumming 'concert' which lifted the roof.

The organising committee is very grateful to the many volunteers who gave their time over the weekend in a variety of unusual jobs. Congratulations Parkes—you've done it again!

In Australia alone, around 80 000 women are directly employed in agriculture. Whether it is working directly in the agricultural sector, donating their time to community organisations or organising natural resource management activities, Australia's rural women have proved time and again they are leaders of rural and regional Australia. SENATOR THE HON. JOE LUDWIG, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES & FORESTRY

Horsin' Around in the beautiful Upper Hunter

Mark your diary — 25, 26 & 27 October 2013 @ Scone

The Scone Women's Gathering Committee is hard at work organising the 21st celebration of this fabulous tradition. Here's just some of the highlights you can look forward to:

- Keynote address from **Robyn Pullman**—a very entertaining, insightful, talented and funny corporate communications specialist who has in more recent times moved to the bush to be with her partner. She will have some terrific take home messages for rural women;
- Fix up your fascinators and bring out your glad rags for Friday evening @ Scone Race Club. You will be welcomed by the Scone RSL Pipes and Drums, and weather permitting be treated to a live demonstration of equestrian vaulting and trick riding. Enjoy the breathtaking scenery whilst enjoying a complimentary glass of bubbly and sampling some sumptuous delights.
- Select from a host of workshops — too numerous and varied to mention here — but we promise there'll be something for everyone!
- Special tours including visits to:
 - Upper Hunter horse studs with world class facilities and famous stallions;

- Patrice Newell's biodynamic farm "Elmswood";
- Dr Judy White from the historic Belltrees property;
- Guided bushwalks to the amazing Burning Mountain; and
- Scone Equine Hospital—a world renowned equine surgical facility.

- Saturday evening Gathering Dinner featuring entertainment from The Scone Singers and a gorgeous ex-Scone High School female student who is ... well, that will be a surprise!
- Local market stalls.
- Sunday Ecumenical Service and free breakfast in the park.

Our Committee, volunteers and younger members of our community, including students from Scone High School and members of the Darley Flying Start Team will be on hand to ensure a warm welcome and a friendly face whenever you need some assistance, guidance or information. We look forward to seeing you in October!

For more information visit: www.upperhuntertourism.com.au.



Elke has 20 years experience in small and medium enterprises and spent 13 years as a management and finance executive in the banking sector. She is also owner/partner in a broadacre grain and beef farming enterprise at Harden. Elke is currently the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant General Manager of the South West Slopes Credit Union Ltd. She is a Director/Member of corporate and not-for-profit (NFP) boards including the NSW Council for Women's Economic Opportunities (CWEO), Regional Development Australia's Southern Inland Committee, and the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED?

I wanted to contribute to the community and use my skills productively so I initially got

involved in local and regional not-for-profit organisations. Over time this led to other opportunities. I have enjoyed the challenges and learning more about local, regional and statewide issues.

Through memberships of organisations such as Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and Women on Boards I regularly meet like-minded women who inspire me. I was also selected for a special program run by AICD and the Federal Government in 2010 to increase the representation of regional women on Australian Company Boards which can still be a 'man's world'.

WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF BEING INVOLVED IN THESE ROLES?

I enjoy being a 'rural voice' on the CWEO which provides advice to the NSW Government on improving women's economic opportunities. Living in the country for over 20 years has given me a strong understanding of the economic, social and environmental challenges faced by rural communities, farmers and their families.

I've also grown personally through meeting progressive and positive people and using my skills in different settings which has broadened my knowledge across a wide range of industries.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY OBSTACLES? WHAT'S ONE OBSTACLE YOU HAVE OVERCOME?

The biggest obstacle along with the tyranny of distance is striking the right balance between family life, the farm, my fulltime executive role and board positions which take me away from home. I can tend to take on too much and have to regularly re-prioritise, get a house cleaner or call family and friends to help with the kids.

Living in a rural area makes it harder to be part of the 'network' that takes place in the cities. It can be done but rather than attending a quick meeting it means putting in a big day, sometimes travelling eight hours to attend a one or two hour meeting.

Technology needs to be used more. Smart devices and remote access is making it easier but being organised

is the key and I run a week planner for each family member! Sometimes I just have to concede that I can't do it all and need to say 'no' more often or send an apology.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR SUPPORT?

My family and husband Charlie are very supportive and always keen to help find a solution. He often has to juggle his work, organise someone else to help or he simply supports me with a cup of tea in bed which is great.

My workplace has also been supportive when I have needed to take leave to attend meetings relevant to board appointments.

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE TO WOMEN WANTING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING?

Find out about regional issues and start on a local level. Gain experience by volunteering on NFP's and approach community leaders of organisations that interest you to see what vacancies are available. Be involved, understand the issues and you too can become part of the solutions going forward.

Rural women going online and getting on track to have a baby!

... continued from page 28

The *Sonoa Fertility Report* is unique because: it's interactive; provides all the information in one sitting—you don't have to search for it; provides only information that is relevant to each individual in a personal and confidential report; all the information has been overseen by worldclass

experts; it's designed for women/couples who want to become pregnant, are having difficulty falling pregnant or are currently undergoing fertility treatment; and it's easy to use and understand.

The report works by asking a series of questions similar to those a doctor or fertility specialist would ask. It then analyses the data, considers each individual's personal history and physiology and develops a

personal and confidential report for each individual user.

A major benefit of the report is that couples can work through it together, at a time that suits them. They can do the report in the privacy of their home, where they can explore issues that may be impacting their fertility. They can learn about treatments and techniques that are recommended for their circumstance, plan out how to optimise their chances and have

all the information they need should they need to see a fertility specialist.

If you are trying to have a baby—or know someone that is trying—the fertility report will put you, or them, on the right track.

Access the Report at: www.sonoafertilityreport.com, download the app 'Online MD fertility' from the iTunes store or for Androids at google play.

Step up, stand out and be heard

By Mariette Rups-Donnelly, International speaker and presenter

The first in a two-part series, Mariette-Rups Donnelly shares her insights and strategies to encourage women to step up and stand out. In the upcoming edition she'll look at how to be heard.

In Australia there is a very public push to get more women into the top boardrooms and into senior executive positions. More and more women are successfully running their own businesses and many women are taking over the major bread winning role in their families. In my work with women around the country I am aware of the growing power of women in business and yet I am told by these same women that it continues to be a challenge to get their message across, a challenge to be acknowledged, a challenge to be heard in male dominated environments.

We can and often do lay the blame at the feet of our male colleagues but there is more to it than that. Women can be reluctant to put themselves forward for important positions, or to take up opportunities to lead unless they are absolutely sure they are equal to the task on all levels. They also neglect to invest in the personal development that will ensure they are prepared when an opportunity arises. Men on the other hand are more inclined to grab onto the coat tails of any passing opportunity and consider themselves and their future success a very worthwhile investment.

Anne Summers in her recent gender pay gap blog pointed out that this pay gap seems to be permanently stuck around 17.5 per cent for men and

women doing the same work. In some sectors it is wider and the trend is that it is increasing not getting less. It is unacceptable, yes?

It is time ladies to step up, stand out and make yourself heard.

To do this you must confront the challenges that hold you back.

FEEL THE FEAR

Any time you step out of your comfort zone it is scary. Remember your first day at your first job? Don't allow nerves to stop you from stepping up. Nerves and fear manifest in different ways for different people.

If you feel you are not ready, acknowledge that you will never be perfectly ready for anything and if you wait until you are, you will wait forever. The best way to learn what is required for a new job or task is to do it.

If you are worried about making a mistake in public, get over it. You learn from mistakes—apologise, correct and move on.

If you hate the feeling of everyone looking at you, or being the centre of attention, you are focussing your attention in the wrong direction. Focus on your message and the people you are speaking to. Think about helping, supporting and encouraging others with your information. This works well for meetings and for presentations; it is not about you, it is about them.

Sometimes nervousness or fear is overwhelming; there are breathing, meditation, hypnotherapy, tapping techniques to help you.

Reframe the way you speak/think about your nerves. If you repeatedly tell yourself how nervous you are you will feed your nerves and they will multiply. Acknowledge, accept and work to minimise them.

TURN UP

You can't get noticed if you are not there. Turn up at business, networking, social and charity events. Family responsibilities can inhibit this so develop a strategy around the events that are important to your career and business development and make sure you attend as many as possible.

Don't just turn up physically, turn up emotionally. Take the time to engage with people, to have a few deeper conversations. Connect people up with each other. Get involved.

STAND OUT AND BE REMEMBERED

Whether it is a board meeting, a staff meeting, a networking event or a catch-up with an important client, consider the following tips before heading into the room and you'll have more chance of being noticed and remembered.

- Enter with confidence. Stand tall, widen your shoulders, ground your feet. Walk with energy as you enter the room.

- Breathe. A good deep breath or two makes you appear relaxed and open.



- Sit up, neither forward or back. Stay centred and open.

- Make eye contact as you speak and focus on the conversation.

- Make it easy for people to talk to you. Wear a conversation piece, an interesting jacket or piece of jewellery. If someone comments about your necklace tell them the story of how you acquired it. We connect to others through stories.

SAY YES TO OPPORTUNITIES

If you are asked to be on a committee, or to give your opinion or speak at an event, do it.

I regularly attend conferences to find all male panels or one woman speaker for every 10 male speakers. When I ask why, I am usually told that they could not find the women with the expertise. Now you and I know that this is rubbish. They probably didn't look hard enough.

But therein lies the problem. The decision makers need to know who you are. You have to put yourself out there to be noticed and when you are offered the opportunity, seize it. Even better, seek out the opportunities and offer yourself.

Ladies it's time to take responsibility for your own success to step up and stand out. Being heard? Now that's a whole other issue. Let's talk about that next time.



Bringing in the change

... continued from page 3

The Future

Last year the decision was taken that the Rural Women's Network will continue but the RWC will be replaced by Rural Women Connect, a group which will use technology to raise and debate the issues that affect rural communities.

This is why it is time to reflect on life, small birds and roses.

I thank the RWC members for their professionalism and commitment to ensuring equity and sustainability of regional and rural communities—and for their friendship. Our learning curve was steep but we leave with our belief that the tenacity of rural women is stronger than before.

I cannot thank enough the various DPI Directors-General who Co-Chaired the Council and the RWN staff for their commitment to rural women. We were more than ably assisted by Sonia Muir and Allison Priest. I can only hope that our paths will continue to cross.

So as I face an empty RWC nest and a new structure that will spread its wings as it evolves into

a new voice for rural women, I feel some melancholy. I will miss my RWC colleagues and the inspiring times we had together as we debated issues that affect the lives of all rural women and celebrated their achievements but I do recognise that the baton has changed and that the new body, Rural Women Connect, will bring a different perspective through its membership—the new chicks who will not only continue to raise issues but have them resolved.

Soon these fledglings will fly into the future. The members of the RWC wish them and the new assembly the best and believe that solid relationships will be formed for the betterment of the significant women who live and work in rural and regional NSW.

It could be time to smell the roses.

20 years of the NSW Rural Women's Gathering

If you missed getting a special limited edition 20 Year Anniversary Rural Women's Gathering tea towel at the Parkes Gathering, you can purchase one for \$6 from RWN. **To order call Novelle on 6391 3433, fax 6391 3543 or email: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au**



RURAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL HONOUR ROLL, 1992–2012

Co-Chairs:

Dr Richard Sheldrake, Barry Buffier (past) Dr Kevin Sheridan (past): Directors-General, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Elaine Armstrong, NSW Country Women's Association [2004–2009]

Nerida Cullen, Livestock Health & Pest Authorities [2007–2011]

Margaret Francis, Rural Lands Protection Board [2001–2006]

Audrey Hardman OAM, NSW Women's Consultative Committee [1992–1996]

Maryanne Kelly, Rural Financial Counselling Groups [1998–2001]

Pat Le Lievre, Western Division Representative [1992–1996]

Susan Mitchell, NSW Farmers [1994–2000]

Fran Rowe, Rural Financial Counselling Groups [1994–1996]

Marie Russell, Western Division [1998–2003]

Members:

Beverlee Adams, NSW Premiers Council for Women [1997–1999]

Patricia (Lolly) Bates-Canty, Aboriginal women's interests [2004–2008]

Joy Beames, NSW Country Women's Association [2009–2011]

Rebel Black, Far West Area [2007–2011]

Patricia Byrnes, Natural Resources Management [2007–2011]

Tammy Carney, Aboriginal women's interests [1998–2003]

Helen Cathles, Rural Lands Protection Board [1997–2000]

Doreen Clough, Minister's representative [1995–1998]

Maree Coughlan, Rural Lands Protection Board [1993–1996]

Jenny Croft, NSW Farmers [2001–2004]

Donna Cruickshank, Aboriginal women's interests [2008–2011]

Kim Deans, Rural Financial Counselling Groups [2007–2010]

Mary-Jane Douglas, Rural Lands Protection Board [1992–1993]

Linda Duffy, Rural Financial Counselling Groups [2005–2006]

Sally Green, NSW Minister for Primary Industries [2006–2011]

Sandra Heilpern, Landcare [2002]

Elizabeth Hood, Natural Resource Management [1998–2001]

Pat Irving, NSW Country Women's Association [2000–2003]

Kath Knowles, NSW Premier's Council for Women [2000–2001]

Caroline Long, Rural Financial Counselling Groups [2002–2004]

Susan McLeish, NSW Farmers [2004–2007]

Angela Martin, NSW Farmers [2008–2011]

Kathy Martin, Minister's Representative [2000–2003]

Annette McCarthy, Minister's Representative [2002–2003]

Cathy McGowan, Independent [1992–1995]

Pam Moore, NSW Country Women's Association [1992–1995]

Lyn Riley Mundine, Aboriginal women's interests [1995–1996]

Marion Palmer, NSW Country Women's Association [1997–2000]

Dr Frances Parker, Academic [2009–2011]

Jenny Quealy, Natural Resource Management [1992–1996]

Neita Scott, NSW Premiers Council for Women [2002–2005]

Vivienne Sinderberry, NSW Farmers [1992–1994]

Merrilie Slack-Smith, Minister's Representative [1992–1995]

Julianne Smart, Natural Resource Management [1996–1997]

Margaret Smith, NSW Country Women's Association [1995–1996]

Denise Turnbull, Far Western area [2004–2007]

Julie Woodroffe, Natural Resources Management [2003–2008]

IPTASS REFORMS FOR COUNTRY PATIENTS

IPTASS administration process have now been simplified making it easier for patients to apply for assistance. Changes include providing extra time for patients to make claims and a more streamlined application process. For more information see: www.health.nsw.gov.au/transport

Reporting sexual assault

There is now another option

- 85% of sexual assaults go unreported in NSW
- NSW Police understand some victims don't want to provide a formal report
- However any information about a sexual assault is important
- Please help the NSW Police reduce this crime
- Complete the online questionnaire

Visit: www.police.nsw.gov.au
click on community Issues/
Adult Sexual Assault

Report online anonymously
SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING OPTIONS (SARO)

Sexual Assault Reporting – Report online anonymously

The Sexual Assault Reporting Option (SARO) developed by the NSW Police Sex Crimes Squad in 2012 allows people who have experienced sexual assault to provide information to police in an anonymous manner. While filling in the form is not the same as making a formal complaint the information may assist Police in other investigations. Alternatively, if Police feel they may be able to investigate they may contact the person, if details are provided, to discuss options. The SARO can be found at www.police.nsw.gov.au click on : Community Issues/Adult Sexual Assault.

When considering accessing the SARO, NSW Rape Crisis Centre recommends discussing the plan with a counsellor as completing the form may raise many emotions and memories that can be difficult to manage.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre: 24/7 counselling | 1800 424 017
Sexual Assault, Domestic & Family Violence | 1800 737 732

Western Care Lodge, Orange

Built and managed by Cancer Care Western NSW, Western Care Lodge provides accommodation for patients and their carers who have to travel to the Orange Health Service to receive specialist cancer treatment. The Lodge is located within walking distance of the hospital and has 13 rooms with ensuite bathrooms and large communal kitchen, dining and lounge areas. Rooms range from \$95 per room per night (short-term) or \$80 per room per night (long term four or more nights). Some guest may also be eligible for IPTAAS rebates which start at \$45 per night for the person receiving treatment or \$60 per night for a person receiving treatment and their carer. Stage 2 building of the Lodge will commence in 2013 providing an additional eight ensuite rooms and a second laundry facility. Over \$750,000 has been raised towards the cost of \$1.3 million.

Western Care Lodge | 02 6391 2300 | themanager@ccwest.org.au | ccwest.org.au | IPTAAS Rebates | www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/transport/iptaas

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

With two black eyes and blood-stained hair,
She crouches in fear, behind the old chair.
The babe in her arms is held out of sight,
As she listens to hear if he's gone for the night.

Her arms are bone weary, but she holds the child still,
Her legs scarcely hold her ... by an effort of will.
She makes her way forward ... she must find her son,
She calls his name softly, what harm has been done?

His answer is muffled, he sobs out her name ...
'Mummy, where are you?' ... It's always the same.
The drinking, then bashing ... then off, out the door!
But tonight is the last straw, she can't take any more!

She gathers them closely, and bids them to 'shush',
Then goes to the next door, gives it a push ...
There he lies, snoring, face down on the bed
'God help me', she whispers, 'I wish he was dead!'

She feels for his wallet and takes out some cash,
'After he wakes up, there'll be no-one to bash!'
Some clothes, and a few toys, some nappies and shoes ...
'We've had four years of bashings, and we've paid our dues!'

The door slams behind them, he'll sleep now, for hours
Dreaming of princesses, in ivory towers!
She hails the first cab and say's 'women's refuge'
She cuddles her children, lets go the deluge!

Warms hands are waiting to help them inside
They share the same problem, there's no need to hide.
She whispers she's sorry to keep them up late,
They all smile, then ask her ... 'Oh, why did you wait?'

© MARGARET LITTLE, GOOLOGONG



Social media is an increasingly important part of any marketing strategy. It allows you to interact in a more personal, ongoing way than most websites do, and helps you stay top of mind with your customers without spending a lot of money on advertising. This direct access to your key audiences can also help you drive word of mouth in a way you never could have before. With almost 1 billion users, Facebook is the biggest social network and the potential reach of a Facebook page is huge.

SETTING UP YOUR PAGE

You may already have a personal Facebook profile, but your business page will allow you to better use Facebook as a marketing and engagement tool. This will allow people you aren't necessarily 'friends' with to interact with your brand and keep your personal life more private.

Setting up a page on Facebook is quite simple, and something every business owner can do, and takes only a few minutes. Go to www.facebook.com/pages and click on 'Create a page'. Once you've selected from the types of pages—most of the time 'Local Business or Place' will be appropriate—you'll be prompted to enter some basic information about your business. When naming your page, try to stick as close to your business name as you can to ensure people can find you.

Brand your page: Include your logo as the profile picture, and add a cover photo that encapsulates your business.

Complete the 'About' section: Include a short description that informs visitors what your

business is about. Make sure you include your contact and location details and website address, and Twitter address, if you have one.

Change the URL: Make it as similar to your website address or business name as possible.

TIP: You can unpublish (temporarily hide) your page from viewers until you're happy with it. Go to 'Edit page > Manage permissions' and check the 'Unpublish' box. When you're happy uncheck the box to make your site live.

BUILDING A FOLLOWING

Interaction with your page content, in the form of likes, comments and shares, is vital to your page growth and marketing success.

Announce your page to existing customers: Use your existing database of email contacts to build your followers on Facebook.

Tell your friends: Start with your friends and family. Ask them to like your page and recommend it to any of their friends who might be interested.

Include links in your email and website: Include a 'Find us on Facebook' button in your emails. Add a 'Like us on Facebook' link to your website or blog.

Put up a sign: Put up 'Find us on Facebook' signs in your business, and include the link on your business card.

ENGAGING YOUR FOLLOWERS

Every time you post is an opportunity to not only engage with existing customers, but to also influence their network of friends. When someone likes a post on your page, it appears in their news feed, instantly putting

you in front of potential new customers.

The key to good Facebook content is to make it interesting for your followers. You want them to comment on, like or share your posts with their friends. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Pictures and descriptions of a new product or service
- Updates about projects you're working on
- Helpful tips on how to use something you sell
- Information and tips your customers would find interesting
- Announcements of upcoming events or sales
- Links to new content on your website or blog
- Links to articles or videos of interest from other sites
- Tips or information that your customers would find interesting
- Customer testimonials or reviews
- Random, interesting facts about your industry
- Funny or interesting quotes

Keep posts short and try to make them visual, by including a picture or video. Experiment with different types of posts and posting on different days and times, to see which are more likely to be liked or shared. You might also consider providing special offers for your Facebook followers, or hold a contest with a prize, which requires your followers to visit your page and comment, like or share.

Your page is a real online community, so use it as a way to do some market research and

gather feedback about your business, by asking questions or seeking input, running a poll, or asking your customers for ideas.

Deciding how often to post will depend on your business and how much time you have available. Nobody knows your customers like you do, so decide how often they'll want to hear from you and what content will best engage them.

Schedule time every day: Plan to spend 15 minutes a day to respond to posts and comments.

Create a content calendar: Once you find the right rhythm for your posts, plan some posts to maximise engagement, or plan a weekly feature that encourages participation. Take advantage of the facility that allows you to prepare and schedule posts ahead of time.

Download the Page Manager App: Timely responses to questions and comments helps increase interaction on your page. Facebook has a Page Manager App so you can get instant notification if someone posts on your page and you can respond from anywhere.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Facebook Insights (available free once your page reaches 30 likes) provides information on which posts are working and an overview of who is connected to your business. This can help you find out which posts sparked conversation and sharing, the most effective days and times to post content, and what types of posts drive your audience to your website.

Have fun, and let the personality of your business shine!

Avoiding scams

Scams are designed to trick you into providing money or personal details that can be used to commit fraud or other illegal activities in your name. Scammers use phone calls, letters, SMS messages, emails, bogus website and even fake job advertisements, so it's important to be alert and do your research before committing to anything. *News for Seniors* had these useful tips to help people avoid problems.

- **Be on your guard about every offer that is made to you:** Your best defence against scams is to hang up the phone, delete the email or shred the letter if it looks even vaguely like a scam.
- **Do your own checks:** Never rely on the information a potential scammer gives you. Research before you deal with the person or company. Ask a close friend or family member for help and advice, or seek independent professional or legal advice.
- **Ask the right questions:** Check the legitimacy of what someone is offering and ask: their name and/or the company they represent; who owns the company (if applicable); and their contact name, address and number.
- **Secure your computer and mobile device:** Delete and do not open any unsolicited or suspicious emails that you do not recognise. Enable the security settings on your computer and mobile devices and install current anti-virus programs.
- **Reduce telemarketing calls:** Put your name on the **Do Not Call Register (1300 792 958 or donotcall.gov.au)** to remove your name from telemarketing phone lists. This should reduce the number of telemarketing calls, but it will not stop scammers from phoning you as they do not follow the rules set by government.

For useful websites with more information you can visit: moneysmart.gov.au and click on **scams** or **scamwatch.gov.au**

Renovation roulette

A campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of working with asbestos when renovating or maintaining homes was launched last November to help educate handymen or women, home owners, DIYs and their children about the risks of exposure to asbestos fibres while undertaking renovations or maintenance in and around the home. In Australia, any home built or renovated before 1987 may contain asbestos. Findings of a study conducted between 2005 and 2008 revealed a rapidly increasing number of mesothelioma cases in men and women which were the result of being exposed to asbestos fibres during home renovations and maintenance.

For important information on managing asbestos in and around your home see: www.asbestosawareness.com.au

Change the way you think about fast food:

8700.com.au gives you the kilojoule (kJ) facts on over 3000 products, helps you find your ideal daily kj figure and has lots more info, hints and tips. There's also a special section just for kids. You can download the free **8700 app** for iPhone and Android which has tools, calculators and converters, tips and information so you can make informed food choices on the go. It even remembers your details!

HEALTH HEROES encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students to take up jobs in health. Information is available on hundreds of different jobs, as well as a range of training and support options for students. **Find out more at:** www.australia.gov.au/healthheroes

WEB WATCH: *Compiled by Allison Priest, RWN Project Coordinator*

www.landcarelife.com

LIFE is about people across Australia getting involved in Landcare in their everyday lives. This site will give you ideas on what you can do or how you can join others in caring for our land and environment.



www.moneysmart.gov.au

In Australia there is more than \$670 million in lost shares, bank accounts and life insurance. Use the 'Unclaimed Money Search' tool to find your lost money!

Visit the Money Smart website and search 'Find unclaimed money'.



www.copmi.net.au

A website for children of parents with a mental illness, it provides valuable information about parental mental illness, short, fun videos with positive messages to help kids cope and a collection of personal stories by young people, parents and carers about their lived experience.

www.onlinebreastfeedingcafe.com.au

Share, discover and chat about breastfeeding and related parenting issues, and access the very latest and best resources.



www.farmz.com.au

A new website where members get a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of other Australian farmers living and working on the land.

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

The new QuadWatch website provides farmers, quad bike users and the community with practical information and assistance to minimise the risk of a quad bike fatality or injury. Visit the Safe Work Australia website and search 'Quad Bike'.



www.dosomethingnearyou.com.au

Get involved with activities in your local area and give something back.

RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA

Recovering from Trauma is a three part video series and workbook created in response to natural disasters across Australia and the world. With people, property and livelihoods lost, children, adults and communities are left in a state of shock and emotional trauma. These practical resources will help individuals, families and communities recover from these traumas. The series is a conversation between Petrea King, from the Quest for Life Foundation and Georgie Somerset, from the Queensland Rural Women's Network. They discuss symptoms of trauma, how it affects children, adults and communities and provides tangible tools and strategies to begin the recovery process. **The workbook and video can be accessed online at: www.questforlife.com.au/trauma-recovery-program**

SNAP, SEND, SOLVE: FREE APP

Snap Send Solve is the free app that lets you report issues and provide feedback to your local council in under 30 seconds Australia wide. It works by your smartphone GPS location tool to determine where you are. It then sends back all relevant council details including contact information, location and email contact. The app allows you to easily capture and report on common issues including litter, hard waste, parking, street cleaning, trees, noise and also provide a general request or general feedback. **Find out more at: www.snapsendsolve.com or download the app direct.**

THINKING OF BUYING SOME RURAL LAND?

This factsheet covers some of the issues buyers should consider when purchasing rural land and includes references to legislation administered by NSW DPI and the Livestock Health & Pest Authority. **To download see: <http://bit.ly/WKXNV3>**

STUDY ASSIST INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Young people who are intending to study now have access to an online search tool that makes it easier for them to find out if they are eligible for government payments such as Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY. All they have to do is answer six short questions. **Find out more at: www.studyassist.gov.au**

HELP FOR CANCER PATIENTS

If you or someone in your family has cancer and you need legal or financial advice you can now call The Cancer Council Helpline.

Cancer Council's **Legal Referral Service** is free for eligible clients and provides assistance with: drafting wills, powers of attorney, early access to superannuation, mortgage hardship variations, credit and debt issues, insurance claims and disputes, employment and discrimination and tenancy disputes.

The **Financial Planning Referral Service** assists with: applying for Centrelink benefits, budgeting, transitioning to retirement, planning your children's future, debt management and superannuation and insurance. Eligible clients are connected directly with a lawyer or financial planner.

For eligible clients, legal and financial planning assistance is provided at no cost. If you don't satisfy the means test you can still choose to have paid assistance. Find out more by calling **The Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20**

FREE WIND FARM GUIDE FOR FARMERS

The *Wind Farm Guide for Host Landholders* has been produced by NSW Farmers with funding from the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage. The Guide provides information for landholders who are considering hosting wind turbines on their property, are in the process of having wind turbines developed on their property, or already host wind turbines on their property. It provides information on the role of landholders in the development process, landholder rights and responsibilities, and potential impacts (positive and negative) of development. **Download the free guide at: www.nswfarmers.org.au**

DARING TO DREAM 2

Daring to Dream 2 is a tribute to many women from rural, regional and remote backgrounds who have dared to follow a passion, overcome challenges and make their goals a reality. Their stories display creativity, perseverance and resilience. Each woman freely shares their knowledge and experiences to provide inspiration and ideas for others who may want to start on a daring to dream journey of their own. Like the first collection of stories, *Daring to Dream 2* celebrates and recognises 25 incredibly diverse rural women from across NSW who are playing key roles as innovators, achievers and/or agents of change within a wide range of industries, businesses, communities, sports, the arts and natural resources. **For more information or to order a copy contact RWN on 02 6391 3620 or email rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au**

NOT IN PIPELINE TO LEADERSHIP

The 2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership, released on 27 November 2012, reveals that the numbers of women at the upper level of corporate Australia are so low that it will take decades before women achieve any meaningful representation, unless organisations adopt a more disciplined approach and set targets at leadership and management levels. **Find out more at: www.eowa.gov.au**

HELP WITH ENERGY & WATER BILLS

If you (or someone you know) are struggling to pay energy and water bills and you live in NSW you may be eligible for financial support or payment assistance. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre has information about rebates and financial assistance that is available to eligible NSW energy consumers. **For more information contact Carolyn Hodge on chodge@piac.asn.au, call 02 8898 6515 or see: <http://piac.asn.au>**

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN REPORT

A report on the Global Conference on Women in Agriculture held in New Delhi on 13–15 March 2012 is now available. The conference, attended by 760 participants from 50 countries, provided a platform to understand the efforts made by national governments, UN agencies, research and community based organisations, to discuss gender issues and identify actions to improve the conditions for women in agriculture, and suggest a way forward for global action. View the report at: <http://tinyurl.com/a6qt3je>

BUSINESS HELP FOR FARMERS

Managing business finances can be a complex and overwhelming task and this is no exception for farmers. A free online resource is available to build your financial knowledge and assist your business. It provides information on: setting up a bookkeeping system; preparing financial reports; seeking financial help; improving a businesses financial position; applying for finance; and managing a loan refusal. There is also a handy glossary to help get a better understanding of complex financial terms to build your confidence when dealing with experts such as banks, lenders and accountants. **To start building your financial knowledge see: business.gov.au/businessfinances**

NEW DATA OUT NOW FOR NSW REGIONS

Data on school completion, labour force participation, family income, unincorporated business income and building approvals is available on the myregion website to assist local and regional planning across NSW communities. This latest information builds on the growing resource of social and economic data hosted on the myregion website, providing a clearer picture of vital characteristics of each NSW region in relation to economy, education and skills, employment, community, housing, income and population.

The data aims to support community leaders, policy makers and planners build an understanding of the broader economic and social context of their region, how these are tracking over time, and how they compare with state and national trends. To view the data simply click on the myregion map or choose a region from the 'Find region by state' menu, then select the 'Data' tab on the left of each regional page. **To access data and find out more see: myregion.gov.au or email: contactus@myregion.gov.au**

WAY AHEAD DIRECTORY

The 10th edition of the Way Ahead Directory of mental health related services in NSW is now available online making it easily accessible for consumers, carers, families, friends, professionals and the general public. The Directory lists more than 2000 mental health services and includes a range of information including mental health factsheets, information on government programs and rebates and details about mental health legislation. The Directory is updated annually by the Mental Health Association NSW. **To use the directory go to: www.wayahead.org.au**

BEST FOR KIDS: FAMILY LAW INFORMATION

This site provides information and resources on family law in Australia for children, parents and anyone else who wants or needs to know about it, including grandparents. **For more information see: www.bestforkids.org.au**

FREE ART PRIZES PLANNER

Here's something for all the 'arty' women out there. The Art Prizes Planner is packed with useful information to plan your art prize diary for 2013 and is regularly updated throughout the year as new prizes are listed. **Download for free at: www.art-prizes.com**



We'd love to hear from you, so why not send us a postcard or photo from where you live, and share your news and views!
 Post to: The Country Web,
 Locked Bag 21, Orange 2800.

There's lots of planning underway for a fabulous weekend of 'Horsin Around' in October 2013! Workshops on all sorts of topics and guest speakers are being rounded up. Tours of the area including the beautiful Horse Studs and lots more fun activities. Scone will be the place to be on 25–27 October. So dust off those fascinators and mark your diary now, book some accommodation and gather your friends together to plan your trip to Scone for the NSW Rural Women's Gathering. For more information see: www.upperhuntertourism.com.au

~ Scone Rural Women's Gathering Committee

Visit the Rural Women's Network internet site at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn



Daring to Dream 2

DTD2 features 25 incredibly diverse women from NSW and includes high profile leaders alongside many remarkable 'unsung' heroines. Their stories display creativity, perseverance and resilience. Each freely shares their knowledge and experience to provide inspiration and ideas for others wanting to start their own daring to dream journey.



'Daring to Dream 2' costs \$11 incl. GST plus post & packaging. Cat No. B930. To order contact Department of Primary Industries Bookshop on 1800 028 374 or go to: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn/aboutus/resources/bookshop/daring-to-dream-2



Department of Primary Industries



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NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

P/CODE: _____

PHONE: _____

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background Culturally & Linguistically diverse background

Age Group: <20 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s+

The Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998 obliges the Rural Women's Network to make you aware of the purposes for which we might use the contact details you have supplied us with. This information will be used by RWN for the purposes of disseminating information (including mailouts). Any information supplied by you to RWN will not be disclosed to any other person unless prior consent has been given.